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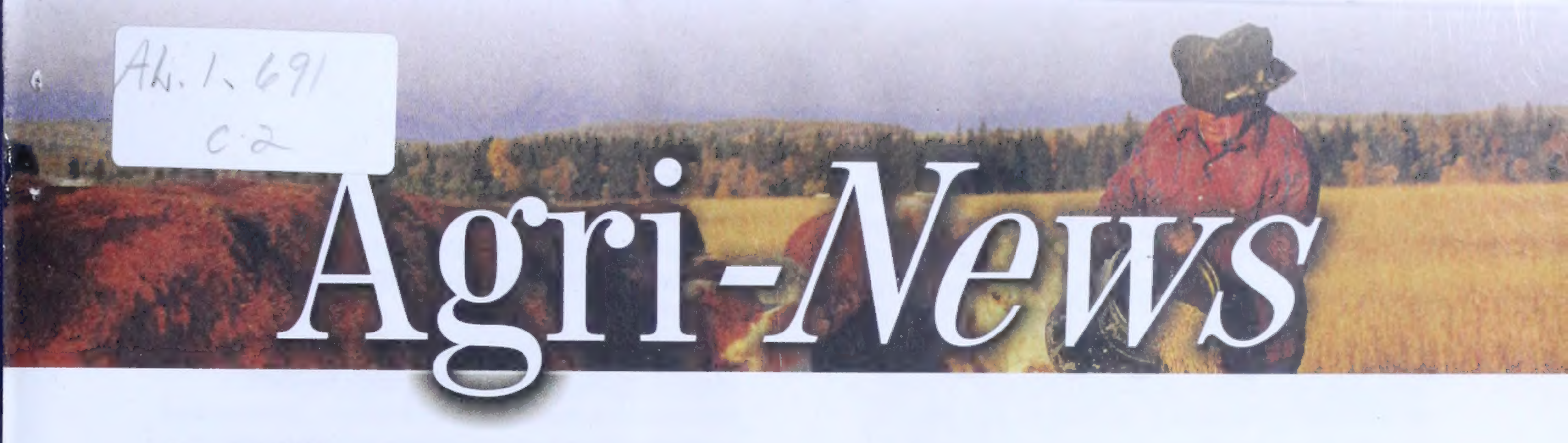

Agri-News

January 1, 2001

Saving the foundered horse

Laminitis is preventable and repairable. A foundered horse can be saved! Break-through techniques to save the foundered horse will be presented at the 2001 ***Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference***, being held at the Capri Centre in Red Deer on January 12 to 14, 2001.

"Sandy Loree, a graduate of the Olds College Farrier Certificate Program, first class journeyman welder and the developer of the 5S Equine Sole Support System for management of many foot problems including wall cracks and laminitis," says Les Burwash, head of equine studies with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "Loree will be discussing his experiences and successes in preventing and dealing with this very painful and debilitating condition in horses."

Loree's presentation will describe necessary techniques to prevent and repair founder and will outline the responsibilities of the horse owner, the farrier and the veterinarian during the process.

Laminitis is the inflammation of the laminae. The inflammation is a local response to tissue cellular injury that is marked by capillary dilation, concentration of clear serum fluids, swelling, redness, heat and pain. The laminae, however, is not targeted specifically, it is actually a systemic condition. The horse suffers aches and pains in various parts, similar to how humans feel with the flue or stress. The laminae is just one of many body tissues affected. The negative affect on the laminae may be compounded because of its location at the extremity of limbs. Other factors that contribute are that circulation is not as efficient in the hoof and there is considerable tension during weight bearing service. An unhealthy laminae is weakened to a point that it can no longer support the normal weight bearing load and literally gets torn apart.

Loree's presentation will cover the weight bearing process within the hoof; the factors that trigger displacement of the hoof wall from the coffin bone; how to prevent laminitis; how to prevent founder; how to repair the foundered foot; methods, techniques, procedures to unload the wall; affects of sole loading and expected results.

The ***Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference***, a premier horse conference that is the only one of its kind in Canada, is conducted by the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the Alberta Quarter

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Alberta AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

SHOUT
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IT

Horse Breeders Group and the Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society – Alberta Division, with major sponsorship from the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

"The 2001 conference features 15 internationally recognized speakers," adds Burwash. "As well as Loree, the program of speakers includes: Dr. Frank Andrews, professor and section chief of large animal medicine at the University of Tennessee, who has worked in the area of gastric ulcers for 11 years; Joe Hayes, AQHA and NRHA judge and one of the top 10 reiners in the world; Dr. Sue McDonnell, head of the equine behaviour lab at the University of Pennsylvania where her primary interest is the study and treatment of abnormal stallion behaviour; Mimi Porter, certified and licensed athletic trainer is responsible for developing the first college curriculum on equine therapy in Kentucky; and, Dr. Don Thompson, professor of animal science at Louisiana State University focusing on nutritional and metabolic interactions with reproductive traits in horses."

The conference is arranged so that attendees can follow four streams of interest – Arabian, Quarter Horse, Thoroughbred and all breeds. While many follow the program designed for a particular breed preference, conference participants can attend any of the sessions, and will receive the printed materials from all sessions.

The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 12 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

Conference registration is $75 per person. For more information about the 2001 conference, contact the Horse Industry Branch in Airdrie at (403)948-8538 or in Edmonton at (780) 415-6107. Government numbers are toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first.

Contact: Les Burwash
(403)948-8538

Growing berries for a growing berry market

Demand for fresh Alberta-grown berries continues to outstrip supply. The emerging Alberta berry industry has attracted hundreds of farmers and acreage holders in recent years to turn their extra pieces of property into profitable alternative agricultural enterprises.

"Consumers are driving the trend, especially 'new consumers,'" says Lloyd Hausher, provincial fruit crops specialist, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Whether they are young people just striking out on their own or well-seasoned pensioners, these "new" consumers are recognizing the importance of fresh, locally grown, quality produce. Consumers, and the public at large, are becoming increasingly more health conscious and looking for new and nutritious food products. Knowing how their food is produced, where it comes from, and the farmer that produces it, is becoming increasingly important to the consumer. Personal service, provided at pick-your-own operations and farmers' markets is becoming more important than price."

As the demand for fresh, top quality, locally grown products continues to rise, so does the opportunity for Alberta's established and prospective berry producers. The three most sought after direct market fruit crops are strawberries, raspberries and saskatoons. Additional berry crops including chokecherries, pincherries, and black and red currants, are produced in limited numbers and enjoy location specific demand.

New varietal developments have provided the Alberta consumer the opportunity to enjoy fresh picked local strawberries and raspberries from early July to September and into October.

"Alberta's berry industry has grown from an almost nonexistent industry 15 years ago to one worth more than $10 million at present," says Hausher. "Consumer demand ensures a continuance of this growth."

Most of Alberta's direct-market berry industry is u-pick or pick-your-own based. This reduces the harvest labour input of the operation to field supervision and sales. Presently, there is an increasing quantity of fruit being sold pre-picked at the farm gate, berry stands and farmers' market.

"Despite how it is marketed, to this point, other than a few specific locations, growers continue to have more demand than product," adds Hausher. "Most producers end up with a mailing/phone list at the end of the year of people still wanting berries."

Proximity to a large urban centre (customers) is most important if looking at starting a direct-market berry farm. Water for irrigation, shelter, soil type and topography are also important considerations.

Very little capital input is needed as machinery required is minimal. Most producers have obtained a good to very good rate of return from these farm operations based on their managerial ability and weather cooperation.

Persons wanting to learn more about this rapidly expanding industry or obtain information on production of these crops may want to attend the upcoming Commercial Berry Production School to be held at the Red Deer Lodge in Red Deer, February 7 to 8, 2001. This 15th annual event will cover general requirements of establishing a commercial berry farm, where to look for additional information and the specifics of producing strawberries, raspberries, and saskatoons for direct market sales.

Cont'd on page 3

Registration for the two-day event is $75 per person for Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA) members and $100 for non-members. Registration at the door is also available and will be $90 per person for AMGA members and $120 for non-members. Single day rates, both advance and at the door are available. For further information, contact Hausher at the CDCS (403) 362-1306.

Contact: Lloyd Hausher
(403) 362-1309 Fax: (403) 362-1306

Census of Agriculture – May 15, 2001

The Census of Agriculture is conducted every five years at the same time as the Census of Population. It provides a profile of Canadian agricultural operations, including information on number of farms, crops, land use, land management practices, livestock and poultry, farm machinery, operating expenses and gross farm receipts. The Census of Agriculture also profiles farm operators based on characteristics such as their age, sex, residence status, farm work, non-farm work and injuries.

The Census of Agriculture identifies trends, issues and successes within the agricultural community and has become the backbone of Canada's agricultural statistics program. It provides comprehensive information on the industry, from the township/rural municipality level to the national level, used to make important decisions.

The confidentiality of individual census questionnaires is protected by law. All Statistics Canada employees have taken an oath of secrecy. Personal census information cannot be given to anyone outside Statistics Canada – not the police, not other government departments, not another person. This is each Canadian's right.

Statistics Canada has also taken steps to ensure the security of the information it collects: access to its premises is controlled and there are no external communication lines connected to its databases.

For further information regarding Census of Agriculture, contact the Alberta representative, Kendall Olson, agriculture communications officer, Statistics Canada, (780) 495-4655 in Edmonton or call toll free 1-800-263-1136.

Contact: Kendall Olson
(780) 495-4655

New phase launched for Ag Summit 2000

The second stage of Ag Summit 2000 begins this week with the establishment of a new group to lead the process.

Agrivantage, a new partnership between Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta, will take over the leadership role from co-chairs Brian Heidecker and Charlie Mayer for the continuing work of Ag Summit 2000.

As a result of Phase One, 17 initiatives were identified and 14 Action Teams have been established to develop plans for addressing the initiatives. Work on the Action Team plans continues.

Agrivantage will be responsible for coordinating and supporting the work of the Action Teams. They will assist with the implementation of recommendations, ideas and initiatives stemming from the Summit process. Action Team plans are due by March 31, 2001.

"I am pleased that we have been able to create this partnership to ensure the on-going support of the Ag Summit 2000 process," says Ty Lund, Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "This has been a massive undertaking and we still have lots of work to do to follow up on the great ideas and enthusiasm. I want to thank Brian and Charlie for their hard work in bringing us to this point."

Agrivantage group members representing the Agriculture and Food Council are: Debbie Hagman of Mayerthorpe, Jim Turner of Cochrane and Les Brost of Lethbridge. Government department representatives are: Ray Bassett of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Ron Dyck of Alberta Innovation and Science and Barry Mehr of Alberta Economic Development. Ken McCready of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada will represent the federal government.

Ken Moholitny, Director of Program Services with Alberta Agriculture, has been named as the executive director of Agrivantage and will oversee day to day administration of the group and the continuing Ag Summit process.

An Alberta Agriculture support team will also continue work on the process, liaising with the group and focusing on departmental initiatives to support the process. For more information about Ag Summit 2000 including the full report on Phase One, check out the web site at **<www.agsummit.gov.ab.ca>**.

Contact: Ray Bassett – Assistant Deputy Minister
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 915-7395
Tom Marwick – General Manager
Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta
(780) 980-5476

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-000

Regional products find their place in the food service market

Menus featuring regional products are a growing trend in restaurants across the country. Regional foods highlight the unique qualities of an area. Regional foods include seasonal products harvested or processed at their peak and served at their freshest to capture the best flavor possible.

"Finding new markets for regional products such as saskatoon berries, currants and even fresh strawberries may be a frustrating experience," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock. "When farmers have a traditional production focus, it's even more challenging. Horticulture and specialty crop producers interested in accessing new markets need a market focus. A market focus lets you view the production cycle from the perspective of what the consumer or end user wants. In most cases, that's a unique, clean, high quality, consumer oriented product at a competitive price."

The food service market is a viable option for many regional products. It's important to recognize that the food service industry is made up of several segments: hotels, restaurants, caterers, institutions, and cafeterias. Within each segment there are further divisions, such as upscale and family budget. Regardless of the food service market niche you choose, it's usually the chef you want to convince to try your product.

"Chefs are interested in supporting small producers who have unique and quality products," adds Engel. "The problem is, chefs don't know who the local producers are and what products they have. It's up to producers to come forward and win the chef over with their product."

Chefs have four basic needs that must be met in order to make a sale: *quality, supply, customer service* and *price*. The product should taste good, be uniform in size, consistently available, and of high quality. It should be clean, appropriately packaged and prepared according to food safety standards.

"Service and delivery needs to be reliable and flexible," says Engel. "Producers need to be knowledgeable about the chef's business as well as the product they are providing. It's important to follow the Food Service Golden Rule: *Never approach a food service professional immediately prior to meal time*. Constant follow-up is needed and through all of these necessary steps, the product must be delivered at a competitive price."

To learn more about accessing the food service market, call Kerry Engel at 780-349-4465 or Karen Goad at 780-538-5285 and ask about the upcoming seminar ***Explore Foodservice, New Options for Heritage Berries***. For toll free access, dial 310-0000 and follow the prompts.

Explore Foodservice runs January 31, February 1, 21 and 22, 2001 in Sherwood Park. Over the two, two-day program, participants will:

- discover what the food service customer really wants and how you can fill their needs.
- identify niche markets in food service.
- meet key contacts and players in the food service industry.
- learn methods to access the food service market and assess its challenges and obstacles.

The program focuses on food service opportunities for saskatoon, wild black (choke) cherry, currant, strawberry and raspberry producers and processors.

Registration brochures are available at Alberta Agriculture district offices.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

Public input requested on livestock operations issues

Albertans are being asked to share their opinions on the development and operation of the livestock industry at a series of public meetings in January 2001.

The Sustainable Management of the Livestock Industry in Alberta Committee, led by Albert Klapstein, MLA - Leduc, has scheduled the meetings to gather input on issues including provincial and municipal roles, approval processes and ongoing monitoring and enforcement related to intensive livestock operations.

Six public meetings are planned around the province in January 2001. Meetings will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in:

- Lethbridge
  January 22, 2001 Lethbridge Lodge Hotel
- Airdrie
  January 24, 2001 Town & Country Centre
- Red Deer
  January 26, 2001 Black Knight Inn
- Vermilion
  January 29, 2001 Lakeland College – Vermilion
- Barrhead
  January 31, 2001 Barrhead Neighbourhood Inn
- Grande Prairie
  February 2, 2001 Travelodge Trumpeter Motor Inn

"Albertans have been providing us with their opinions and suggestions over the past couple of years through a consultation paper and questionnaire," says Klapstein. "Now we need to finalize the provincial recommendations and outstanding issues."

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The committee members include Klapstein, producer Ben Thorlakson of Airdrie (past President of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and Past Chairman of the Alberta Cattle Commission), Roelof Heinen from Picture Butte (former President of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties), Judy Gordon, MLA for Lacombe – Stettler, and Ron Stevens, MLA for Calgary – Glenmore. The committee will gather input through public meetings and through written submissions. A report on the committee's recommendations on ensuring the sustainable development of the livestock industry is expected early in the spring.

Anyone wishing to make a formal presentation to the committee is asked to schedule a presentation time by contacting Louise Starling at (403) 340-5306. (toll-free access is available by first dialing 310-0000).

Written submissions can be e-mailed, faxed or mailed to:

Albert Klapstein, MLA
Chairman, Sustainable Management of the Livestock Industry in Alberta Committee
513 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6
Phone: (780) 415-0989
E-mail: dwills@assembly.ab.ca

The deadline for written submissions is **January 15, 2001.**

Additional details about the public meetings can be found at: **<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/livestock/ilo/index.html>** then click on Industry Expansion Development.

Contact: Louise Starling
(403) 340-5306

Agri-News Briefs

Peace Country Beef Congress

The 3rd annual Peace Country Beef Congress is being held in High Prairie on January 12 and 13, 2001. Purebred and commercial pens, trade booths and educational speakers pertaining to the beef industry will be featured. Participants can also enter the Beef Stakes and win a herd sire, purebred heifer or a pen of commercial heifers for only $10. The Congress will feature the best beef cattle in the Peace Country at the High Prairie Agri Plex. Admission is free.

Agronomy Update 2001

Thirty speakers will be addressing agronomy research and other related topics at the ***Agronomy Update 2001***, being held at the Lethbridge Lodge, Lethbridge on January 17 and 18, 2001. Cost of the conference, based on cost recovery, is $75 per person. Registration must be received by January 10, 2001. For further information or to register, contact Amy Stratton, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge, (403) 381-5237. To send registration by mail, send your name, address and phone number along with a cheque payable to ***Farming For the Future Research Trust Fund*** to Stratton's attention at Agriculture Centre, #100, 5401 - 1 Avenue S., Lethbridge, AB T1J 4V6

Minor use procurement officer appointed at CDCS

To meet producer needs for pest management solutions on low-acreage, high-value crops, a Consortium consisting of Alberta Pulse Growers Commission, Irrigated Alfalfa Seed Producers Association, Red Hat Co-operative Ltd., Potato Growers of Alberta, the Bean & Special Crop Unit of Agricore, and Alberta Sunflower Seeds Ltd., agreed to establish and fund a Minor Use Procurement Officer position at the Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. The seventh partner in this Consortium is Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Rudy Esau has been appointed to this half-time position. Until his retirement in June 1999, Esau was a weed scientist at CDCS working with special and horticultural crops where his research contributed to a number of minor use pesticide registrations. In this new position, Esau will be accepting minor use proposals from the Consortium, completing the required documentation and organizing research to fill data gaps. For many horticultural and special crops, access to effective pesticides is essential for economic crop production. Minor use submissions are evaluated by the Pest Management Regulatory Agency of Health Canada in Ottawa and following approval, the new use can be added to the pesticide label. In addition to procuring minor use registrations, another goal of the Consortium will be to expand its membership among various grower associations. For further information, contact Rudy Esau at (403) 362-1304.

Coming Agricultural Events

January 2001

Wills and Estate Planning
January 3
Community Hall
Veteran
Dale Robinson – (403) 742-7500

Alberta Pulse Network
January 4 - 5
Coast Terrace Inn
Edmonton
Ken Lopetinsky – (780) 674-8213

Calving Workshop for Ladies
January 6
Lakeland College
Vermilion
Rhonda Laumbach – 1-800-661-6490

Water Act Registration Workshops
January 8
Ryley
Martin Baert – (780) 663-3730

Water Act Registration Workshop
January 9
Willingdon
Martin Baert – (780) 663-3730

Farm Accounting Using Quickbooks
January 10 - 12
Medicine Hat
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Wills and Estate Planning
January 10 - 20
Seniors Centre
Oyen
Dale Robinson – (403) 742-7500

2001 "Direct Seeding Ideas" Workshop
January 10
Knights of Columbus Hall
Falher
Tom Staples – (780) 837-2211

Direct Seeding Workshop
January 10
Knights of Columbus Hall
Falher
Tom Staples – (780) 837-2211

Water Act Registration Workshop
January 10
Viking
Martin Baert – (780) 663-3730

Wills and Estate Planning
January 11
Norsemen Inn
Camrose
Leanne Chubocha – (780) 986-8985

2001 Direct Seeding Ideas Workshop
January 11
Dunvegan Motor Inn
Fairview
John Zylstra – (780) 835-2291

Direct Seeding workshop
January 11
Dunvegan Motor Inn
Fairview
John Zylstra – (780) 835-2291

Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference
January 12 - 14
Capri Centre
Red Deer
Horse Industry Section, Alberta Agriculture – (403) 948-8538

Alberta 4-H Leaders' Conference
January 12 - 14
Red Deer Lodge
Red Deer
Henry Wiegman – (780) 427-4532

Water Act Registration Workshop
January 15
Myrnam
Cathi Hayduk – (780) 632-5400

Farm Machinery Economics
January 16 - 17
Bow Island
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Calving Management Seminar
January 16
Provincial Building Main Floor Conference Room
Drayton Valley
John Van Keulen – (780) 542-5368

Transitions 2001 – Agri-Food Leaders Conference
January 16
Red Deer
Karen Ryan – (877) 342-5973
Wendy Bulloch – (204) 727-1852
Phil Hyde – 1-877-342-5973

Water Act Registration Workshop
January 16
Innisfree Community Centre
Innisfree
John Bidulock – (780) 657-3358

Agronomy Update
January 17 - 18
Lethbridge Lodge Hotel
Lethbridge
Terry Sheen or Ross McKenzie – (403) 381-5126

Equity Manager
January 17 - 19
Boardroom, Ag Centre
Lethbridge
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Water Act Registration Workshop
January 17
Mannville Elks Hall
Mannville
Cathi Hayduk – (780) 632-5400

Wills and Estate Planning
January 18
Lamont Recreation Centre
Lamont
Betty Lyzaniuk – (780) 632-5400

Equine Nutrition Seminar
January 18
Wetaskiwin Co-op Country Junction
Wetaskiwin
Jodi Johnson – (780) 361-1240

Water Act Registration Workshop
January 18
Vegreville Ag Society Office
Vegreville
Cathi Hayduk – (780) 632-5400

Herd Health Workshop
January 20
Lakeland College
Vermilion
Rhonda Laumbach – 1-800-661-6490

Calving Workshop
January 21
Lakeland College
Vermilion
Rhonda Laumbach – 1-800-661-6490

Livestock Industry Public Meetings
January 22
Lethbridge Lodge Hotel
Lethbridge
Louise Starling – (403) 340-5306

Banff Pork Seminar
January 23 - 26
Banff Centre
Banff
Contact – (780) 492-3236

Agricultural Service Board Provincial Conference
January 23 - 25
Fantasyland Hotel
Edmonton
Reg Kontz – (780) 427-4226

Farm Machinery Economics
January 23 - 25
Airdrie
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Embryo Implantation for Beef and Dairy Producers
January 23 - 26
Lakeland College
Vermilion
Rhonda Laumbach – 1-800-661-6490

Wills and Estate Planning
January 23
Memorial Hall
Westlock
Betty Lyzaniuk – (780) 632-5400

Pursue Profits 2001
January 23
Burnt Lake Livestock Mart
Red Deer
Alberta Agriculture – 1-800-387-6030

Water Act Registration Information Session
January 24
Provincial Building Boardroom
Taber
Lynn Taylor – (403) 223-7907

Pursue Profits 2001
January 24
Hanna Community Centre
Hanna
Alberta Agriculture – 1-800-387-6030

Livestock Industry Public Meetings
January 24
Town & Country Centre
Airdrie
Louise Starling – (403) 340-5306

Wills and Estate Planning
January 25
Centennial Senior Citizens Club
St. Paul
Betty Lyzaniuk – (780) 632-5400

Hangin' on the Cow's Tail 2001
January 25
Thorsby Centre
Thorsby
Bill Grabowsky – (780) 361-1240

Livestock Industry Public Meetings
January 26
Black Knight Inn
Red Deer
Louise Starling – (403) 340-5306

Farm Machinery Economics
January 29 - 30
Vegreville
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Livestock Industry Public Meetings
January 29
Lakeland College
Vermilion
Louise Starling – (403) 340-5306

Wills and Estate Planning
January 30
4708 - 50 Avenue, Legion Hall
Red Water
Betty Lyzaniuk – (780) 632-5400

Farm Accounting Using Quickbooks
January 31 - Feb 2
Vegreville
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Farm Tech 2001
January 31 - February 2
Westerner Park
Red Deer
Farm Tech 2001 – (403) 263-0007

Explore Food Service
January 31 - February 22
Strathcona Wilderness Centre
Strathcona
Darleen Lynes – (780) 349-4465

Livestock Industry Public Meetings
January 31
Barrhead Neighbourhood Inn
Barrhead
Louise Starling – (403) 340-5306

February 2001

Wills and Estate Planning
February 1
Hall B, Social Centre
Vegreville
Betty Lyzaniuk – (780) 632-5400

Livestock Industry Public Meetings
February 2
Travelodge Trumpeter Motor Inn
Grande Prairie
Louise Starling – (403) 340-5306

Land Rental/Leasing Workshop
February 6
Provincial Building Conference Room
Drayton Valley
John Van Keulen – (780) 542-5368

Pursuing Market Opportunities for Beef Industry
February 6
Agriculture Centre (Lecture theatre)
Airdrie
Alberta Agriculture – 1-800-387-6030

Wills and Estate Planning
February 7
Elks Lodge, 5018 - 49 Avenue
Vermilion
Bety Lyzaniuk – (780) 632-5400

Pursuing Market Opportunities for Beef Industry
February 7
Black Knight Inn
Red Deer
Alberta Agriculture – 1-800-387-6030

2001 Berry Production School
February 7 - 8
Red Deer Lodge
Red Deer
Lloyd Hausher – (403) 362-1309

Land Economics – A discipline approach to land purchase decisions
February 8 - 9
Lethbridge
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Pursuing Market Opportunities for Beef Industry
February 9
Elks Hall
Coronation
Alberta Agriculture – 1-800-387-6030

Water Act Registration Workshop
February 12
Two Hills
John Bidulock – (780) 657-3358

Farm Plan/Cash Flow Planning
February 13 - 15
Provincial Building Boardroom
Taber
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Land Rental/Leasing Workshop
February 13
Breton Community Centre
Breton
John Van Keulen – (780) 542-5368

Growing Rural Tourism – A landmark conference for Alberta!
February 13 - 14
Camrose Regional Exhibition (CRE)
Camrose
Sharon Homeniuk – (780) 963-6101

Western Barley Growers Annual Convention
February 15 - 17
Radisson Hotel Calgary Airport
Calgary
WBGA – (403) 948-8530

Wills and Estate Planning
February 15
Legion Hall
Wainwright
Betty Lyzaniuk – (780) 632-5400

Bedding Plant Workshop
February 15
Crop Diversification Centre North
Edmonton
Dr. M. Mirza – (780) 415-2303

Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies Convention
February 16 - 18
Medicine Hat
Reg Kontz – (780) 427-4226

Water Act Registration Workshop
February 22
Derwent
John Bidulock – (780) 657-3358

Explore Direct
February 26 - 27
Nisku Inn
Nisku
Betty Vladicka – (780) 415-2305

Farm Accounting Using Quickbooks
February 26 - 28
Provincial Building
Bow Island
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Artificial Insemination for Beef and Dairy Cattle
February 26 - March 2
Lakeland College
Vermilion
Rhonda Laumbach – 1-800-661-6490

March 2001

Calgary Bull Sale
March 4 - 6
Stampede Park
Calgary
Alberta Cattle Breeders Association – (403) 261-0312

Herbs and Health-2001 Western Canadian Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Conference
March 5 - 7
Ramada (Edmonton Inn)
Edmonton
Stan Blade – (780) 415-2311

The Business of Functional Foods Seminar
March 5
Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre Edmonton – 1-888-747-4114
Connie Phillips or Kevin Swallow – (403) 986-4793

Alberta 4-H Council Annual Meeting
March 11 - 12
Coast Plaza
Edmonton
Mahlon Weir – (780) 427-4463

Western Canadian Dairy Seminar
March 13 - 16
Capri Centre
Red Deer
Joanne Morrison – (780) 492-3236

Alberta Pork Congress
March 14 - 15
Westerner Exposition
Red Deer
Marchjorie Zingle or Dianne Boyd – (403) 244-4487

Artificial Insemination for Beef and Dairy Cattle
March 19 - 23, 2001
Lakeland College
Vermilion, AB
Rhonda Laumbach – 1-800-661-6490

AIA Provincial Annual Conference and Meeting
March 21 - 23
Lloydminster
G. Gilchrist – (780) 632-5400

Farm Machinery Economics
March 26 - 28
Grande Prairie
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

Land Economics – A Discipline approach to land purchase decisions
March 29 - 30
Grande Prairie
Bradley Smith – (403) 223-7907

April 2001

Bashaw Jackpot Steer and Heifer Show
April 7
Bashaw Agricultural Grounds
Bashaw
Kelly Northey – (780) 372-4021

Rural Alberta Showcase
April 20 - 21
Bashaw Recreation Centre
Bashaw
Jackie Northey – (780) 372-3648

Alberta 4-H Selections
April 27 - 30
Olds College
Olds
Mahlon Weir – (780) 427-4463

May 2001

Alberta Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) 2001 Annual Conference
May 10 - 11
Black Knight Inn
Red Deer
Paul Gervais – (403) 556-4250

Census 2001
May 15
Canadian Census Day
Kendal Olsen – (780) 495-465

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July 2001

International Farm Management Congress 2001
July 8 - 13
Wageningen, The Netherlands
J. Wilson Loree – (403) 556 4213

XIV International Plant Nutrition Colloquium
July 28 - August 3
University of Hannover
Hannover, Germany
IPNC Secretariat – +49-(0)511-762-2626

November 2001

International Canadian Western Agribition
November 18 - 25
Exhibition Park
Regina, Saskatchewan
Canadian Western Agribition – (306) 565-0565

December 2001

Site Specific Management
December 11 - 12
Mayfield Inn
Edmonton
Dave Burdek – (780) 674-8305

January 2002

Banff Pork Seminar
January 22 - 25, 2002
Banff Centre
Banff Pork Seminar – (780) 492-3236

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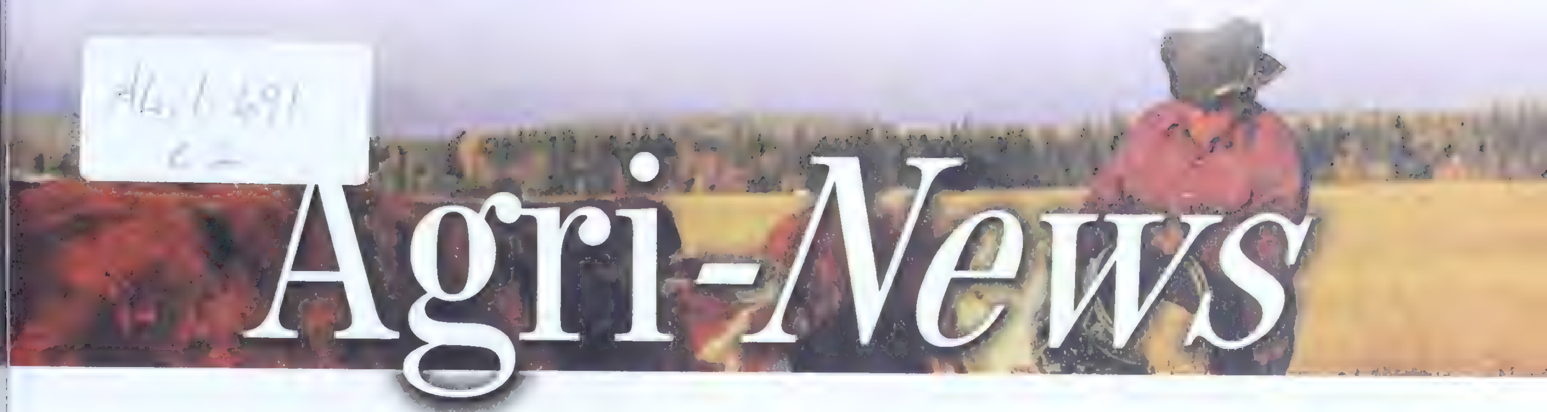

Agri-News

January 8, 2001

Growing Global

This year, the *Going Organic* (GO) and the 5th *Western Canadian Medicinal and Aromatic Plants* conferences are merging to present ***Growing Global***. The conference is being held in Edmonton at the Ramada Hotel & Conference Centre on March 5 to 7, 2001.

"*Growing Global* will concentrate on presenting information on organic and new crop opportunities," says Mike Dolinski, organic specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton, and conference co-chair. "The agenda for the conference is filled with internationally respected speakers in the fields of organics, medicinal and aromatic crops. The keynote speaker on the first day of the conference is Florence Sender, FoodLogic Inc, U.S.A. Sender is speaking on the change in consumer thinking regarding organic and natural foods."

Other presenters planned for the conference include: Lee Arst, President/CEO Coleman Natural Beef, Denver, CO, speaking on Market Opportunities for Organic and Natural Beef in the U.S.; Elaine Ingham, Oregon State University presenting Soil Ecology Research; Keith Jones, Organic Program, USDA, Washington, DC, will discuss the National and International Implications of the US Organic Rule; and, Dr. Gail Campbell, Tudor Glen Holistic Veterinary Clinic, St. Albert, AB, speaking on Holistic Animal Treatment.

Presentations rounding out the conference agenda include: New Crops; World Organic Commodity Exchange; Agronomics of Echinacea and St. John's Wort; Opportunities for Essential Oils in Alberta; Organic Beef Opportunities in the EU and US; Retail Demand for Organic Beef in the US; New Crop Developments in Alberta; Industry Development Issues Herbs and Aromatics; and Assessing Who's Who in the Organic Food Distribution System.

For more information on *Growing Global*, contact Heather Shewchuk at (780) 422-7196 or visit the webpage at **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca/conference/organic-herb.html>**.

Contact: *Mike Dolinski* *(780) 422-4873*
Heather Shewchuk *(780) 422-7196*

Alberta Government numbers are toll free by first dailling 310-0000

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@agric.gov.ab.ca
Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Medication and farm injury accidents

Over the next 18 months, a study on medication use and farm related injury accidents is being conducted in Alberta. Dr. Steve Voaklander, Senior Lecturer, Epidemiology, Department of Rural Health, University of Melbourne, Australia, is leading a study on this issue and thinks there is a direct correlation between medicine and farm accidents, especially involving Albertans over the age of 65.

"In life studies in other areas, a relationship between medication use and increased incidents of falls and vehicular accidents has been shown," says Voaklander. "We will be especially targeting medications such as pain killers, narcotic pain medications, sedatives and sleeping medications."

In Alberta, approximately 30 per cent of people over the age of 65 use narcotic pain killers; 20 per cent use some form of sleeping medication and 10 to 15 per cent are prescribed anti-psychotic medications in any given year.

This Alberta study is targeting the province's farm community as many farm managers are 65 or older. Agriculture is a unique industry in that a considerable number of people over the age of 65 are still actively working on farms and ranches.

Health records of farm injuries will be cross referenced with Alberta Health Care and Blue Cross information looking for a pattern of medication use by those who have been involved in injury accidents on the farm.

"The information gathered will be disseminated to groups dealing with occupational health and safety for farmers across the country," adds Voaklander. "We will be especially targeting family physicians in rural areas. As an intervention point, they are key to alerting their patients of the dangers of these medications, used individually or in combination, when operating farm machinery or handling livestock."

Voaklander anticipates that the results of this study will be available by the end of 2002.

Contact: Don Voaklander
+61 3 5823 4500
don@unimelb.edu.au

Pursuing market opportunities in the beef industry

Beef producers and processors who want to find out how to access and identify niche market opportunities in the beef industry will want to attend the ***Pursuing Market Opportunities in the Beef Industry*** program. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's beef, agri-food and rural development specialists are offering this one-day program in four locations during February 2001.

"The program provides a chance to learn what customers want and assess whether the needs and wants of new and developing premium meat markets can be met," says Kathy Lowther, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture in Airdrie. "It's also an opportunity to hear local producers describe how they have made changes in their operations and ways they have successfully moved from a production emphasis to more of an end-user focus."

The program is also designed for the cow/calf producer who is interested in an alternative to the traditional method of marketing calves.

"It's for anyone looking for ways to add-value on the calf crop," says Bill Grabowsky, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Wetaskiwin. "The workshop is an excellent place to hear about new options and opportunities. The program focuses on how other producers and processors have aligned themselves with specific breeds or feedlots through partnership agreements. We want to show the ways others have made logical choices to pursue other markets in the beef industry."

Speaker topics include: Ways to develop a market or end-user focus; what the feedlot buyers want; what the packers really want; and, a panel to share producer experiences.

Pursuing Market Opportunities in the Beef Industry will be held:

Airdrie	February 6	Red Deer	February 7
Wetaskiwin	February 8	Coronation	February 9

All workshops will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Registration is $25.00 per person (includes GST, lunch and workshop materials). The registration deadline is January 31, 2001. To register call, toll free, 1-800-387-6030.

Contact: Kathy Lowther
(403) 948-8537

Food – it's a tourist attraction!

Farmers' markets, farm stores, farm gate, internet, direct to the consumer or restaurant – whatever marketing channel is being used, if you are selling a food product direct to the consumer you need to attend the first ever **Explore Direct Conference** at the Nisku Inn, Nisku, on February 26 and 27, 2001.

"Farm direct gurus and food experts from across North America will be heating up discussions this winter as they share their expertise and experiences with farm direct sales and show conference attendees the benefits of linking agriculture with tourism," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist - business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock.

Cont'd on page 3

One of the keynote speakers is Judy Schultz, feature writer with the Edmonton Journal and no stranger to food and travel. Schultz has written books on both subjects, and spends an average of two to three months out of the country most years. Wherever she goes, she looks for markets, cooks and producers.

"Cooks and producers are the most direct route into any culture," says Schultz. "As a journalist, I'm always looking for ways to get a handle on the social and economic side of wherever I am. The food tells the whole story – what they eat, when, where and why".

In researching her new book, *Foodlover's Guide*, Schultz uncovered many of the province's unique products and producers. They included artisan bakers, cheese makers, producers of game, honey and more. She also profiled producers who have made an exceptional contribution to the food industry in this province and restaurant personalities who have made a difference.

Schultz is passionate about regional cuisine and the impact farm direct marketers can have on growing that aspect of the food industry in Alberta. At ***Explore Direct***, Schultz will demonstrate the importance of food when it comes to agriculture and tourism. She will discuss how to use the appeal of heritage and regional foods as a marketing tool, stressing the connection with the tourism industry. The local Alberta Farmers' Market is part of the rural tourism scene and homemade saskatoon pie can be a tourist attraction!

Attend ***Explore Direct*** to strengthen marketing skills, explore winning alternatives and expand networks.

For more information on the conference, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 422-1789. For toll free access, dial 310-0000 and follow the prompts. Registration brochures are available at Alberta Agriculture District offices.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465
kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca
Linda Hawk
(403) 529-3616
linda.hawk@gov.ab.ca
Karen Goad
(780) 538-5285
karen.goad@gov.ab.ca

Having healthy lambs

The nutritional value of winter-feed supplies can make a big difference during lambing. Many of the problems sheep producers run into at lambing can be minimized or eliminated by testing winter-feed.

"Whether producers are feeding bales or stockpiled forages, producers can prevent problems by ensuring adequate, balanced nutrients are being given to pregnant ewes," says Susan Hosford, sheep development advisor with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Camrose.

Feed should be tested for adequate levels of selenium, a nutrient essential for pregnant ewes. Many Alberta producers supplement their sheep with selenium to avoid white muscle disease in lambs. This nutrient can be supplied in salt, in minerals, in supplements (by veterinary prescription) and in injectable forms.

"In the case of selenium, a little is good but a lot is NOT better," says Hosford. "To a producer's eye, selenium toxicity and selenium deficiency can look the same. Some supposed selenium deficiencies have turned out to be vitamin E deficiencies. Without accurate testing, it's just a guess."

Many feed companies will do the sample testing if feed or supplements are being purchased from the company. Take a few moments and talk to the company's nutritionist or to your veterinarian about the test results and the possible need for supplements to ensure balanced winter feed rations.

Contact: *Susan Hosford*
(780) 877-0007

Marketing ranch-raised beef and knowing the costs

Approximately 450 beef producers attended the ***Western Canadian Grazing Conference*** held in Red Deer in November 2000.

"Several speakers talked about how they went about trying to find an end market for their ranch-raised beef," says Bill Grabowsky, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "For most of them, it was an uphill battle, but what was evident about their struggle and eventual success was that they were committed. More importantly, they knew what made their product different from the others; they knew their costs to raise beef; they test marketed their product, and, delivered a product based on what their customers wanted."

During the conference, several of the speakers used a goal-oriented approach to decision making (*Holistic Resource Management* or HRM) to help guide attendees along. Beef

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producers eventually moved from breeding, calving and selling calves to marketers of the beef they raised themselves, as well as selling and delivering a product that was identified by the customer for a profit.

"The last two years have been a profit taking venture for many cow-calf producers," adds Grabowsky. "Previous cow cycles have shown that, based on the present trend, profits could again be in the making."

Dr. Harlan Hughes, retired livestock production/marketing specialist from North Dakota State University Extension Service, indicated that the future grass farmer will be *cost-of-production* driven. Decisions will be based on an information driven system and there will be a high degree of management intensity involved in making those decisions. He also explained that low cost producers will be the high profit producers and they won't necessarily come from the high weaning weight cow herds.

"Identifying and treating each cow as a single production unit with its own production records is absolutely critical for managing economic efficiency in a herd," adds Hughes.

The question is, can Alberta beef producers afford to not know their costs of production and if they don't have a handle on the costs can they still expect to be efficient in the next 10 to 12 years?

Contact: Bill Grabowsky
(780) 361-1240

Farm and ranch diversification – value-added opportunities

Look around the rural landscape to see many examples of farm revenue diversification enterprises. Agri-tourism and farm direct marketing are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the variety of enterprises encompassing the new agricultural economy. What was once viewed as hobby farming has taken on new meaning as farmers seek to add value to their farm products and services.

"Today, agricultural producers are taking several steps when considering diversification," says Janice McGregor, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Morinville. "Some of those steps include: exploring non-traditional farm animals and crops; providing educational consulting and training; testing new marketing and distribution channels, such as e-commerce; adding value to existing products through processing and packaging; promoting farm and ranch recreation; revitalizing historic buildings, machinery and equipment; and, establishing contract services, leases and time shares."

'Agripreneur' is the term McGregor uses to describe a producer who organizes, operates and assumes the risk for diversification of an established or new business associated with food, agriculture or a natural resource. Agripreneurs carefully assess their land, buildings, equipment, and skills before determining niche market diversification opportunities. By capitalizing on the skills and interests of farm family members, and through creative packaging and marketing, they are opening up many non-traditional channels to sell agricultural products and services.

There has been much discussion about what a *successful* diversified farm operation looks like. It is difficult to collect benchmark data on new farm diversification options as producers are often unwilling to share costs of production, marketing tips and contacts, organizational structure or sources of information. Much of the information available is anecdotal and there are no guarantees that an idea which worked in one area or on one particular farm will work as effectively anywhere.

Diversification examples abound on the internet. Some intriguing ideas include:

- theme dinners at a B&B
- culinary classes using artisan food products grown on the farm
- wine fellowships
- cheese subscriptions
- mail order Christmas trees
- on-line herb catalogues
- on-farm concerts at an outdoor amphitheatre
- working ranch holidays, gold panning, customized bus tours
- quail leases
- Rent Mother Nature – *rent a maple tree, lobster pot, beehive*
- Rent the Ranch – *by the day, week or month*
- farm apprenticeships
- stewardship workshops

"Farm operators involved in diversified operations have identified their target customer, developed valuable networks and assessed the risks and opportunities of adding value to their current products and services, adds McGregor. "They have integrated the new enterprises into their working operation and involved all family members and staff in the provision of good customer service. It all adds up to success."

More information about successful farm diversification is available in the fall 2000 issue of the Northwest Processor. The newsletter links rural food processors and farm managers with research, technology and food industry information. It is published quarterly and is free.

Contact (780) 349-4465 and ask to be put on the mailing list for the Northwest Processor newsletter.

Contact: Janice McGregor (780) 939-4351

Agri-News Briefs

Wills and estate planning

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Baker Financial Services are presenting a seminar on ***Wills and Estate Planning for Farmers and Ranchers***. One of the many topics discussed is the different ways to pass on the farm to the family's farming child or children; the different ways to be fair to non-farming children; and, making wills and estate planning as easy as possible. For further information on the seminar, contact Betty Lyzaniuk, client service representative with Alberta Agriculture, Vegreville, (780) 632-5400. Please register in advance by calling Lyzaniuk or the contact number listed with each seminar location. The seminar is being offered at 7:00 p.m. in the evenings at the following locations on the date indicated:

Oyen	January 10	Oyen Seniors Centre	(403) 664-3899
Camrose	January 11	Norsemen Inn	(780) 679-1210
Lamont	January 18	Recreation Centre	(780) 895-2219
Westlock	January 23	Memorial Hall	(780) 349-4465
St. Paul	January 25	Centennial Senior Citizens Club	(780) 645-6301
Redwater	January 30	Legion Hall	(780) 939-4351

The following three locations are the same Alberta Agriculture seminar, however the second sponsor is different. Note that Pro-Fund Distributors Ltd., Vegreville, will assist in Vegreville; Advance Insurance & Investment Advisors Inc., Vermilion, will assist in Vermilion; and Gilchrist Agencies Ltd., Wainwright, will assist in Wainwright.

Vegreville	February 1	Social Centre, Hall B	(780) 632-5400
Vermilion	February 7	Elks Lodge	(780) 853-8101
Wainwright	February 15	Legion Hall	(780) 842-7540

Bladder-worm in Cattle

A new Agri-Facts factsheet ***Bladder-worm (Beef Measles) in Cattle*** (Agdex 655-7) is available. The factsheet includes a description of the condition, what to look for in cattle, how it affects cattle and what economic losses occur. The factsheet also describes the affects to humans, as this is a condition that arises when cattle graze on pastures contaminated with human sewage. Agri-Facts factsheets are available free of charge at all Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development district offices and through the Publications Office, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

Bison production seminars

The Bison Centre of Excellence is offering a one-day seminar for bison producers and Albertans considering bison production. The seminar, organized by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Bison Centre of Excellence, is being held at five locations in 2001. Topics covered at the seminar include: economics and business planning; handling, facilities and fencing; nutrition, health and reproduction; and, marketing and the Alberta Bison Commission. The seminar will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The registration fee is $40 per person or $60 per couple. For further information or to register, contact the Centre at (780) 986-4100. The locations and dates are:

Lethbridge	January 26	
Vermilion	January 29	
Leduc	January 30	
Peace Region	April 10	(location TBA)
Peace Region	April 11	(location TBA)

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Agri-News

January 15, 2001

Handling nutrients

A lot of information has been prepared on intensive livestock operations and the potential problems of manure disposal. From a crops perspective, that manure is a stockpile of valuable plant nutrients, the only problem is figuring out how to get these nutrients to the right place, in the right balance and to do it in an economical manner.

"The first concept to keep in mind is that we really do not create nor destroy nutrients," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "When crops are grown, the nutrients are taken from the ground and placed in plants. When animals eat the plants, some of the nutrients are converted to animal products and the rest is either given off as heat and gases to the atmosphere or deposited on the ground. When plants or animals are sold off the farm, nutrients are exported with them. When feed is purchased, nutrients are brought onto the farm."

Recycling has taken a long time getting established in waste disposal systems. As long as it is cheaper to make something new and throw out the old than it is to salvage part of the old, all parts of society will accumulate more waste. Livestock wastes are no different. Both crop and livestock producers have to find economical ways to capture individual parts of those nutrients and make them useful. Some of the new ideas on intensive farming are exciting in this aspect.

"Individual farmers have to make decisions on a practical basis," adds Hockridge. "It's starting to happen. Moving animals to feed rather than feeding everything in one area is popular on many farms. Managing pastures to extend the grazing season and swath grazing are examples where nutrients are left out in fields where they can do some good. Composting and solids separation are ideas for concentrating nutrients in products that have to be transported back out to fields."

It is imperative to begin thinking of nutrient balancing in the longer term. Combinations of nutrient types can help manage and orchestrate nutrient use. Much of the nutritional value of products, such as manure, are not available in the first year, however, plants need available nutrients balanced while they are growing. Adding the right nutrients in the form of non-organic fertilizer can make the use of organic sources more effective. Farmers need to know the level of fertility in their soils and in the products being applied, to get the most benefit.

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@agric.gov.ab.ca

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

As a province, Alberta will be better off if producers and industry process their raw materials into value added products here at home – whether that is refined plant products or something that has been processed into meat. We can look at the by-products of processing as waste that has to be disposed of properly, or as additional raw materials that can be valuable inputs for another product.

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

Explaining the bankers' annual review process

Every year, Credit Institutions, or CI's, (Banks, Credit Unions, and Treasury Branches) are required to get together with their farm client's and review their credit facilities, and other accounts. Creditors look over the financial results of an operation for the past year to determine if the risk (chance that the loan payments will be completely missed or not made on time in the upcoming year) they are carrying by doing business with the farm has increased, decreased, or stayed the same. From this annual assessment of the risk rating of an operation they determine if they want to continue to do business with the farm and decide whether to change the interest rates and fees they charge to continue to do business with that farm.

"Creditor's walk a fine line in doing business, as they want to be fair to their clients, but also be fair to their shareholders and members," says Ron Lyons P.Ag., financial management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agricultural Business Management Branch, Olds. "Their clients demand low interest rates and fees, and their shareholders and members demand higher profitability so the value of their shares and equity increases generating a good return for them on their investment."

To be fair to both clients, shareholders and members, CI's usually use a *RISK vs. RETURN* system. As the risk associated with an account increases, the return they will want to do business with the farm business will increase as well. This usually means charging higher interest rates and higher fees for higher risks. Alternatively, if a farm business had a good year and the risk rating of their account decreased, the business may be entitled to lower interest rates and fees, and these should be negotiated with the CI. This should be done yearly.

To assess the risk associated with a business, the CI's assess management ability, financial results for the previous and upcoming year, the margins on, and type of, security they have in place, as well as other risk factors. This article will explain how they determine the management risk associated with the farm business.

In assessing the management risk, your CI representative will ask you questions relating to the different types of farm management skills required to be successful. For production management they will want to know what type of long term average yields you are generating? How do these compare with area and provincial averages? Do you keep production records? Do you monitor weight gains? Do you use specialized production techniques like rotational grazing, A.I., soil testing, or pregnancy checking? If you utilize any successful specialized production management techniques, make sure your CI representative is aware of them.

"Under financial management, creditors will want to know if you are a low cost or high cost producer," adds Lyons. "They will determine whether you go through an annual accrued Review Engagement Report process each year with your accountant. Whether or not you keep up to date financial records and monitor them frequently. Who, and how the financial decisions are made on the farm. Whether the farm has written financial goals and plans, with specific time frames to achieve them. They need to know if all loan payments are up to date and if your financial information is ready before your annual review date comes up."

To assess your marketing management ability they will want to know if you plan ahead to market your farm products in an aggressive way? Or do you just haul to the local cash market when you require money? How does your management team utilize it's knowledge, and up to date vs. historic market information, to use forward pricing tools? How are decisions made as to when and how to market your products?

Risk management is important. Do you use or have crop, liability, fire, and life insurance? Is your operation diversified? What are your other strategies relating to risk? Some of these risk management strategies would be included under management headings.

How is your human resources management on the farm? What is the age of the principals of the operation? Is there an estate and succession plan in place? How is the farm structured?

What are your farms written strategies under each of these management headings? Who is responsible and accountable for what? These are important questions to consider, be able to answer, and have completed.

"If you have made some significant changes that upgraded the management skills and strategies on your operation in the past year, make sure your CI is aware of this fact," says Lyons. "This should enable them to give your farm a better management risk rating, and this may lower your interest costs and fees charged. These upgrades could include things like taking courses in any of the aforementioned management areas, and having some illustrations as to how you are applying what you learned towards the management of your operation. Also, preparing a written business plan for your

Cont'd on page 3

operation, and pointing out examples of how you are adhering to the plan, and implementing the strategies contained within the plan would help. These are a couple of examples of how you can improve the rating given to the management team of your operation."

Strong supporting statements for each of the management questions asked will help the operation get a good management rating. Once the management rating stage has been completed, one of the hurdle's to getting the annual review approved will be completed. You will want to have made a very good impression on your CI representative.

This is the first in a three part series. Part two will deal with the how Credit Institutions analyze the financial risk associated with a farming operation. The next article will show what the CI's look for in financial information, what you can do to be prepared for their questions, have your financial information showing the best possible ratios, and thus lower the financial risk rating given to the operation.

Contact: Ron Lyons, P.Ag.
(403) 556-4236

Improvements planned for crop insurance

Some immediate improvements to Alberta's crop insurance program are being made for the 2001 crop year, stemming from the initial recommendations of the Crop Insurance Review Committee. Other recommended improvements are also being considered but will take more time to implement due to complexity, need for further research or the need for negotiation with the federal government.

The review committee is also preparing to hold another series of public meetings to report on their recommendations and to gather further input on some remaining issues. A final report from the committee is expected in the spring.

The initial recommendations reflect the findings of the committee since October 1999. Chaired by former federal agriculture minister Charlie Mayer, the committee held 41 meetings with crop insurance clients and other farmers, hosted a number of open meetings around the province and attended meetings with producer organizations, insurance staff and adjustors.

Changes for the 2001 crop year:

- changes to the re-seeding benefit to ensure it more closely reflects re-seeding costs;
- changes to the index calculation that omits third-party damage (e.g. wildlife damage) from the calculation used to determine a farmer's index;
- reintroduction of harvesting allowances on standing crops to ensure harvesting costs do not exceed the value of the crop;
- implementation of a developmental program to test options for creating an effective pasture insurance component under Forage Insurance;
- creation of insurance coverage for chick peas;
- separation of bean types and wheat types for the 2001 crop year;
- mechanisms will also be developed to allow for coverage of other new and emerging crops in the future; and,
- other administrative measures to improve delivery of customer service.

"While these may be rather minor changes to our programs, they respond directly to a number of concerns raised by farmers," says Ty Lund, Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "We will continue to work on the more substantive issues, but these will take more time and more research to implement. In the meantime, we will make these improvements immediately. Our intention is to ensure Alberta farmers have the best risk management tools at their disposal."

The review committee is planning further public meetings in January 2001 to report back their recommendations and to gather more information, primarily on yield and price coverage levels. Meeting times, dates and locations:

South			
Lethbridge	9am to noon	January 15	Lethbridge Lodge
Medicine Hat	2pm to 5pm	January 15	Cypress Centre
Vulcan	2pm to 5pm	January 15	Legion
Strathmore	9am to noon	January 16	Community Centre
Central			
Oyen	9am to noon	January 16	Senior Rec Centre
Airdrie	2pm to 5pm	January 16	Legion
Hanna	2pm to 5pm	January 16	Community Centre
Red Deer	9am to noon	January 17	Holiday Inn

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North

Camrose	9am to noon	January 12	Norseman Inn
Stony Plain	3pm to 5:30pm	January 12	Convention Inn
Vermilion	9am to noon	January 18	Lakeland College
Vilna	2:30pm to 5pm	January 18	Cultural Centre
Westlock	1pm to 4pm	January 19	Westlock Community Hall
Grande Prairie	1pm to 4pm	January 22	Travelodge Trumpeter Inn
Fahler	9am to noon	January 23	Knights of Columbus
Grimshaw	2pm to 5pm	January 23	Mile 0 Motor Inn
Manning	9am to noon	January 24	Elks Youth Centre
Fort Vermillion	9am to noon	January 25	Community Complex

For more information about the recommendations and the review committee, please check out the web site at **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca/acirc/>**.

Contact: *Michael Lohner*
Office of the Minister, Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-2137

Rick McConnell
Vice President,
Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
(403) 782-8243

Charlie Mayer
Chair, Crop Insurance Review Committee
(780) 427-4917

For toll-free calling in Alberta, dial 310-0000

Background information available on the Alberta Agriculture internet website:
<http://www.gov.ab.ca/acn/200012/10144.html>

2001 Denver Western 4-H Alberta Livestock Judging Team

The 2001 Alberta 4-H Denver Livestock Judging Team had Alberta's highest showing ever at the Denver Western Livestock Judging Contest held January 6, 2001 in Denver, Colorado. UFA-AgPro, Alberta Treasury Branches, and Alberta 4-H co-sponsor this judging award trip.

"Four Alberta 4-H'ers and one chaperone travelled to Denver to compete in this Western North America Competition that involved over 100 contestants from 24 states and one province," says Henry Wiegman, provincial 4-H agriculture specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. The Alberta team consisted of **Erica Dolen**, Spirit River; **Jocelynne Gosling**, Strathmore; **Lindsey Mitchell**, Kitscoty; **Martina Peake,** Finnegan and **Randy Grabler**, Barrhead.

Team Alberta finished in 15th place overall out of 27. The members evaluated 10 classes consisting of four beef, three swine and three sheep classes; giving reasons on seven of the ten classes. The Alberta team missed getting 5th spot in beef judging by one point.

"This was an outstanding effort because the U.S. teams are together for usually more than five years representing the same county, as well as having consistent coaching," adds Wiegman. "The Alberta Team is picked provincially and has only one competition before travelling."

The 4-H members who travelled to the Denver Western 4-H Livestock Judging Contest won the right to represent Alberta at the ATB Alberta 4-H Provincial Judging Competition held in Olds in August.

Alberta, through the support of UFA Ag-Pro, Alberta Treasury Branches and the Alberta 4-H Program Trust, sends a team of four judges to the Northern International Livestock Exposition Judging Contest in October at Billings, Montana; a team of eight judges to the Agribition International Livestock Judging Competition, Regina, Saskatchewan in November; and, a team of three judges to the Calgary Livestock Evaluation School in June.

Contact: *Henry Wiegman*
(780)427-4532

4-H Alberta Hippology Team excels in Denver

The 2001 Alberta 4-H Denver Western Horse Classic – Hippology Team took First Place Team Honours in the Hippology Contest at the Denver Western Horse Classic in Denver, Colorado during the first weekend of January, 2001. Lammle's Western Wear, Masterfeeds, Burwash Brand Horse Gear, UFA, Gas Alberta Incorporated, and SSG Gloves co-sponsor this Alberta 4-H Equine project 4-H award trip.

Four Alberta 4-H'ers and one chaperone travelled to Denver to compete in this Western North America Competition that involved over 50 contestants from 13 western states and one province. The Alberta team consisted of **Randy McGowan**, Killam; **Tamara Quaschnick**, Hanna; **Jennifer Folton**, Brooks; **Amanda Winder**, Mornville; and, **Janet Kerr** (chaperone), Stettler.

Cont'd on page 5

Team Alberta finished in 1st place overall out of 14 teams. Hipplogy is the study of Horse Science. Members evaluated live horse judging classes, live horse performance classes, participated in a slide show horse identification challenge, wrote a test on equine knowledge and participated in a horse husbandry identification station contest. **Tamara Quaschnick** also placed second overall and **Jennifer Folton** placed sixth overall.

"This was an outstanding effort by these competitors. This is the sixth year Alberta has sent a team to this competition and we've been consistently improving," says Henry Wiegman, provincial 4-H agriculture specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "To walk into a competition in the U.S., competing against teams using their own resources and winning, shows the excellent program Alberta 4-H offers its 4-H equine members. Our Provincial 4-H Equine Advisory Committee has done an excellent job of preparing our competitors."

These members won the right to represent Alberta at the Alberta 4-H Provincial 4-H Horse Classic Competition held in Olds in August.

Contact: *Henry Wiegman*
(780) 422-4H4H

Selling heritage berries directly into restaurants

Have you ever thought about putting your premium heritage berries or berry products on dinner plates in high-end or family restaurants? Not sure how to do it, or even what heritage berries are?

"Heritage berries are those forgotten fruits that are part of our rich social heritage," says Karen Goad, agrifood specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie. "They're the ones Grandma used to pick and preserve. For the last few years, they've taken a back seat to the surge of exotic fruits, but now we're seeing renewed interest in the heritage varieties - saskatoons, wild black (choke) cherries, currants, strawberries and raspberries."

Food service is a logical place for many high-end heritage products to begin the journey through the marketing chain. Chefs are increasingly willing to buy direct from producers and processors in order to find unique products or items that are difficult to purchase from distributors. Although some restaurants buy directly from growers hoping to get a lower price, chefs working for high-end restaurants are often willing to pay top dollar for hard-to-find items. For a top quality producer or processor, prices may be high enough to justify the expense of delivering products direct to the restaurant.

"Products must be of premium quality and freshness and available as needed," adds Goad. "Specialty products not available in wholesale markets are top sellers. Chefs also consider reliability of supply and delivery, consistency and price."

Advantages of selling direct to restaurants:

- steady market throughout the production season
- advance orders allow you to harvest only what is already sold
- consistent price, often 10 per cent or more over wholesale
- personal contact with buyer
- potential of "brand name" recognition of locally grown produce

Disadvantages of selling direct to restaurants:

- most practical if near a large urban centre or tourist area
- frequent delivery is required due to limited storage space in restaurant kitchens
- wide variety of products is ideal to justify delivery costs
- product liability insurance premiums may outweigh the profits

Producers or processors of saskatoons, chokecherries, currants, raspberries, strawberries or other heritage fruits who feel they have a premium product that should be getting a premium price, are invited to attend the **Explore Foodservice, New Options for Heritage Berries**.

Explore Foodservice runs January 31 & February 1 and February 21 & 22 in Sherwood Park. Over the two, two-day sessions of the intensive program, attendees will talk to six food service industry representatives, participate in three tours, and receive enough information to start a food service marketing plan. The registration of $150 per person includes meals and two nights accommodation at the Strathcona Wilderness Centre.

For more information on the conference, contact Kerry Engel at (780) 349-4465 in Westlock or Goad at (780) 538-5285 and ask about **Explore Foodservice, New Options for Heritage Berries.** For toll free access, dial 310-0000 and follow the prompts.

Registration brochures are available at Alberta Agriculture district offices.

Contact: *Karen Goad*
(780) 538-5629

Explore new directions in direct marketing

Farm direct marketing is simply selling agriculture products and services directly to the consumer. There are many ways this can be done. Each marketing channel has its own costs and rewards. **Explore Direct** is a conference that will examine different methods of marketing rural Alberta products direct to consumers. **Explore Direct** is being held on February 26 and 27, 2001 at the Nisku Inn, Nisku.

"The early bird registration of $75 entitles you to a one and one-half day, information packed program," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "Each session will help strengthen marketing skills, expand networks and explore winning alternatives. Two pre-conference workshops and a Rural Fare reception are available at an additional cost."

Three plenary sessions anchor the conference program: *Customer Relationship Marketing – Finding Your Dream Customer; Marketing and Promoting your Diversified Operation*; and, *Travelling on their Stomachs – Exploring the Links Between Food and Tourism.*

"This conference features Nancy Kindler, the food service marketing guru, presenting the portion on *finding the dream customer*," adds Engel. "With over 20 years experience in marketing and sales to the food service industry, Kindler will discuss what has worked for her in customer relationship marketing. She'll explain how to evaluate who has the potential to be a dream customer and how to build a market one customer at a time."

Wayne and Helena Ulrich of Cherry Point Vineyards operate an integrated farm operation on Vancouver Island producing grapes, sheep, herbs and nursery plants. They produce VQA wine in their farm winery, in addition to operating an on-farm art gallery and wine store. In *Marketing and Promoting a Diversified Operation*, the Ulrichs tell their formula for successful farm direct sales. Their business motto, 'friendliness and accessibility', is their life. Their business is open every day of the year except Christmas. They take pride in giving lighthearted yet educational tours where participants arrive as customers and leave as friends. Their exceptional customer service program ensures that employees know customers always come first.

In *Travelling on their Stomachs*, Edmonton Journal feature writer Judy Shultz discusses the natural synergy between the agri-food industry and tourism using lots of examples. She'll look at how other areas have maximized the mix to their economic benefit and stimulate your imagination with ideas for agri-tourism at home.

Explore Direct is a one-stop information source for marketing rural Alberta products direct to consumers. Join the Alberta Farmers' Market Association and Alberta Agriculture February 26 and 27, 2001 in Nisku to explore new directions in direct marketing.

For more information on the conference, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 422-1789. For toll free access, dial 310-0000 and follow the prompts. Registration brochures are available at Alberta Agriculture district offices.

Contact: *Karen Goad*
(780) 538-5285
karen.goad@gov.ab.ca

Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4465
kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca

Linda Hawk
(403) 529-3616
linda.hawk@gov.ab.ca

Agri-News Briefs

Organic and new crop opportunities

The ***Growing Global*** conference, being held in Edmonton at the Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre on March 5 to 7, 2001, is an opportunity to hear about what is going on at all levels and in all areas of organic production and processing. The conference highlights opportunities for medicinal and other unique crops. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Special Crops Product Team has partnered with the Alberta New Crops Network and *Go Organic!* to present a unique agenda filled with provincial, national and international speakers to provide useful advice, scientific information, and present an overview of where these industries are moving in the next century. Combining *Go Organic!* and the *Western Canadian Medicinal Plants Conference* presents the greatest value to both the organic and herbal/aromatic crops industries. The conference will also be hosting a trade show and poster session on March 6 and 7. For information about booth participation at the Trade Show, contact Alan Dooley at (780) 422-2559. Conference registration is $200.00/person on or before February 9th; after February 9th it will be $250.00/person. Student registration is available for $50.00. Single day registration is available for $150.00/person. For further information or to receive an agenda/registration form, contact the Crop Diversification Centre North at (780) 422-1789.

Direct sales to retail seminar

Producers interested in selling their product at retail outlets, such as large grocery stores, garden centres, building centres and hardware stores, will want to attend the Direct Sales to Retail seminar. The seminar is being held on January 22, 2001 at the Black Knight Inn, Red Deer. The seminar will focus on: what motivates a buyer; identifying a product's competitive advantage; establishing a successful business to business relationship; pricing a product; production costing; developing successful buyer presentations. Registration is $50 for the one-day seminar. For further information, contact Gerry Gibbons, (403) 340-5300, <**gerry.gibbons@gov.ab.ca**> or Lisa Houle, (403) 340-5369, <**lisa.houle@gov.ab.ca**>.

Organic farming workshop

The Introduction to Organic and Natural Farming workshop is being held on January 25, 2001 at the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development district office in St. Paul. The workshop offers valuable, basic information for those considering growing crops or raising animals in a natural or organic way. Albertans who wonder about the principles and trends of the organic industry and how it affects agricultural practices and consumer food choices will also enjoy the information presented. Leading industry and government representatives will present information about this young and rapidly growing industry and what it means to be an organic farmer. Registration is $30 per person or $50 per couple (includes GST and lunch). For further information or to register, contact Sharon Boorse or Audrey Katerenchuk at (780) 645-6301 (toll free in Alberta via 310-0000) or fax: (780) 645-2848.

Olds Swine Stockhandlers' Workshop

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the University of Alberta and Olds College are hosting the annual Swine Stockhandlers' workshop on January 23, 2001. The workshop is for barn staff working with a sow herd. The workshop topic is achieving consistent weaned pig output. Guest speakers include: Gary Dial, a partner of New Fashion Pork, Inc., a 25,000-sow operation in Jackson, MN. His expertise is in production operations, information systems, marketing and live animal purchasing; and, George Foxcroft, a professor and researcher of swine reproductive physiology at the University of Alberta, known world-wide for his expertise in gilt and sow reproductive physiology. This interactive workshop will be held from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m in Room 614 Animal Science at Olds College. Participants can expect interactive problem-solving work throughout the afternoon. *Please bring a calculator*. No live animals will be used. Registration fee is $30 per person for the first person from a farm and $25 per person for each additional person from the same operation. For more information or to register, contact Michelle Follensbee at (780) 415-0828 (toll free via 310-000) fax: (780) 427-1057, or e-mail <**michelle.follensbee@agric.gov.ab.ca**>.

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Living With Wildlife

Living With Wildlife – The Natural Environment is an afternoon/evening session being held at the Western Heritage Centre, Cochrane, on January 19, 2001 from 2:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The session includes presentations, proceedings and a buffet dinner. The evening presentation features include: Charlie Russell speaking on Living with Bears; Barry Adams presenting Fire in the Eco-System; and Brad Stelfox discussing Cumulative Effects of Overlapping Land Uses. The thought provoking presentations and discussion on wildlife and the environment promises to challenge participants. Tickets are $30 per person and must be purchased in advance from the M.D. of Bighorn Office, Exshaw, (403) 673-3642; M.D. of Rocky View Office in Calgary or the Coffee Traders in Cochrane. Further information is available by calling (403) 233-7678.

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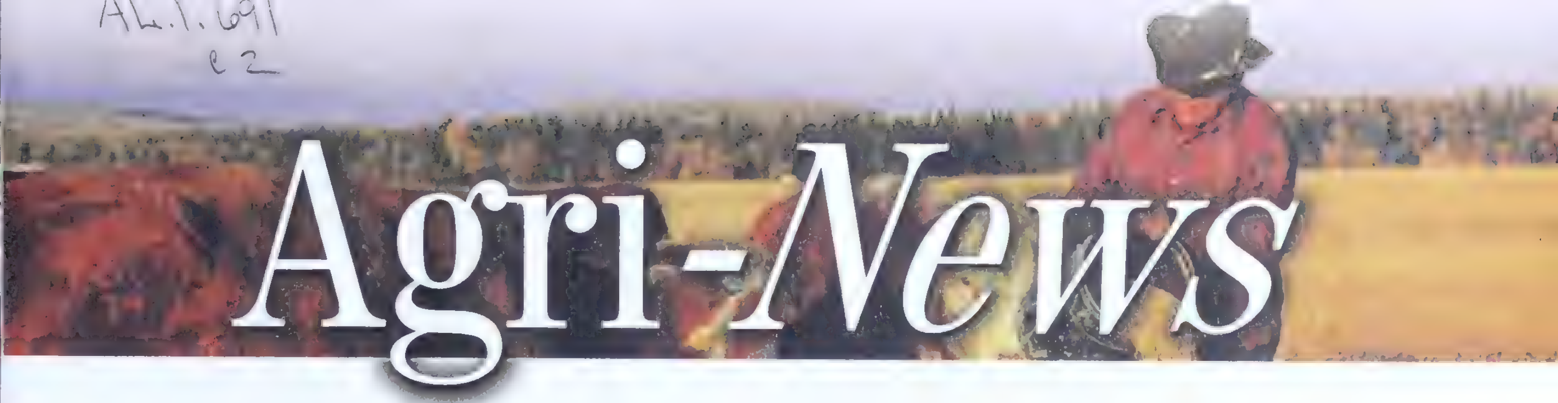

Agri-News

January 22, 2001

Explaining the bankers' annual review process

Part two of a three-part series

Each year, credit institute representatives meet with farm businesses to complete their annual reviews. In going through the annual review process, the credit institution (CI) will be assessing the risk associated with a business. To do this, the CI will assess management team's skills and abilities; financial results for the previous and upcoming year; the margins on, and type of, security they have in place; and more.

Part one of this three-part series (*Agri-News January 15, 2001*) discussed how the CI assesses an operation's management ability and rates the management risk associated with a farm business. It also explained the CI's risk vs. return interest rate and fee pricing strategies. Now it's time to look at how CI's review financial information to determine the financial risk associated with a farm.

"In assessing a business's financial results for the previous year, CIs will determine if the business *Debt Serviced* in that year," says Ron Lyons, P.Ag., financial management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agricultural Business Management Branch, Olds." In other words, did the operation generate enough accrued net income, without including depreciation and amortization or term interest, to cover living costs and make all of the term loan payments on schedule?"

The total cash income and expenses are accrual adjusted for opening and closing accounts receivable or deferred checks; grain, livestock, and supply (etc.) inventory; and accounts payable. Be sure to deduct the term interest expense from the business expenses, as this number will be in the debt servicing requirements calculation. Subtract the total accrued expense number that was calculated, annual living costs and income tax payable from the accrued farm income plus off farm income that was previously calculated, and the result is the debt servicing capacity for the operation.

Next, add up the total principle and term interest payments for the year – this is the debt servicing requirements. With these numbers it is possible to calculate the debt servicing ratio for an operation, which is the debt servicing capacity divided by the debt servicing requirements. This ratio should be around 1.4 or higher, which means the farm business will have had

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excess debt servicing capacity, or a budget surplus. This is good as it means that the operation generates extra funds each year to cover any unforeseen cash flow emergencies or interest rate increases, and to save for the future. In the supply managed industries 1.2 and higher is okay.

"Another important ratio CI's will look at is the debt to equity, or leverage, ratio," adds Lyons. "This is the debt divided by the equity in the operation. For example, an operation with assets totalling $1,000,000 and debts of $300,000 would have equity of $700,000. It's leverage ratio would be $300,000/$700,000 or 0.43. With the assets calculated at market value, the leverage ratio should be less than 0.9, this means that there is less debt than equity. In the cow/calf industry, the leverage ratio should be around 0.33 or lower, meaning the business shows a third as much debt as equity. Grain, and mixed cow/calf - grain farms should usually be around 0.55 or lower. In the supply-managed industries, 0.9 and lower is usually okay."

The third important ratio CI's will consider is the business's current ratio. Current assets are normally calculated at market value. The current assets are divided by the current liabilities to come up with this ratio. Two (2.0) or better is an excellent current ratio, but being over 1.5 is okay. For a feedlot operation, subtract the amount of current debt outstanding on the feeder cattle from the current liabilities, and the same amount from the current assets. This will give a more accurate picture of the current ratio. In the supply managed industries 1.0 or higher is okay.

The numbers quoted here are general and in actuality will vary depending on the area the business is located in. Local land prices, and whether you lease land and equipment, will affect the ratios. Type and mix of farm enterprises, whether or not there is off-farm income, the business's efficiency ratio (are you a low or high cost producer?), and standard of living required, among other factors, will all affect what a farm's satisfactory ratio numbers are, or should be. CI's may use other ratios to further analyze the business's financial risk.

"Having completed their risk analysis of the past fiscal year, the CI will want a projected farm plan for the upcoming year, so they can do the same risk assessment by looking at the same ratios for the upcoming year," says Lyons. "The ratios used in the overall financial risk rating of the farm will usually be the lower of the projected year, past year, or an average of the past three to five years. So, if the operation had a tough year, is undergoing a significant change or expansion, the projected year would be the most appropriate year to use. The farm must let their CI representative know of any problems or changes, so the CI uses the most appropriate year in the farm's financial risk rating. If one financial ratio, or management factor, is very strong, it will help compensate for a ratio or factor that is weaker. These ratios and factors are all taken into consideration to come up with an overall risk rating for the operation."

A strong financial statement, good historical results, and a large budget surplus projected for the upcoming year, will get an operation a good financial risk rating. Once the financial risk rating stage has been completed, the farm business has cleared two of the three hurdles to getting their annual review done.

Part three of this three-part series deals with other risk factors that Credit Institutions analyze to determine the overall risk associated with a farming operation. Reading all three of these articles will help you prepare for a CI representative's questions at your next annual review.

Contact: *Ron Lyons, P.Ag.*
(403) 556-4236

Dairy producers to elect delegates

On October 18, 2000, Ty Lund, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, supported implementing the recommendations of the Dairy Industry Governance Review report. The Review was completed by Tom Thurber, MLA for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

One of the first steps in implementing the recommendations is to form a producer delegate body. Nomination forms have been sent out to Alberta producers and they are currently considering nominations of their fellow producers. Once nominations have been collected for the eight provincial voting districts, an election will be held.

The Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council was requested by the Minister to run the delegate election. "Up to 40 delegates will be elected from across the province representing all producers," says Mike Pearson, the returning officer for the Marketing Council. "All dairy producers will be receiving nomination forms, and later, ballots in districts where elections will take place."

Once the delegates are elected, Marketing Council will continue to work with the delegates as they elect from themselves five Policy Committee members and two Dairy Board members.

By mid-March 2001, the producers will have elected representatives that will lead the industry into a new governance structure. Processors will also be a part of the interim Policy Committee and Dairy Board, working together with producers to develop a strong and viable governance structure for Alberta's dairy industry.

Contact: *Mike Pearson*
Returning Officer
Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing
(780) 427-2164

Marketing commodities

Agricultural products, for the most part, are considered commodities. A commodity is defined as, "any of several raw or partially processed materials, eg. Grain, coffee, wool or metals" (Canadian Oxford Dictionary). With commodities, one batch is the same as another: a bushel of #3 hard spring wheat is considered the same as another one, no matter where it comes from.

"Many industries try to differentiate their product from other products to gain competitive edge in the market place," says George Rock, farm management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Leduc. "A number of years ago, Tom Droog from southern Alberta was growing sunflowers. Thought they were well-suited to his farm and yields were good, he was receiving relatively low prices. His sunflowers were better than most in the market place, so he wanted to get a better price for them. He started processing and marketing them under the trade name *Spitz* . Today, he sells thousands of tonnes per year for a premium price. He was able to make his sunflower commodity different from the rest."

Strategies designed to gain market share and to highlight a perceived advantage in hopes of getting a higher price, are getting more common. Whenever possible, industries try to alleviate thoughts of their products as commodities.

"These strategies are appropriate for all types of business, including agriculture," adds Rock. "Try to highlight how a product is different from the rest. If growing grain, make sure relatively large samples of grain are taken from each bin on the farm. To highlight it in the best possible light, consider getting an official grade and bushel weight from the Grain Commission. It's completely within a producer's rights to obtain such a grade and then use this knowledge to negotiate the best possible combination of grade and price with the elevator companies."

Know your product and look for markets that are in keeping with the characteristics of the product. For barley, some varieties are used in the human market for pearling or flour that may command a higher price. If the product being sold is a lower bushel weight barley, a discount may help to sell it. Higher protein wheats will interest API processors in Red Deer.

"If selling hay, consider getting it protein and fibre tested," says Rock. "This, combined with an accurate estimate of quantity, will enable the producer to isolate buyers prepared to pay extra for specialized forage products, such as dairy or specialized livestock. To sell lower quality hay, discount the price and consider targeting the horse or bison market."

For feeder cattle, differentiating the production through weight, type and colour are important factors to consider. For breeding stock, heifers or cows should be pregnancy tested, bulls should be semen tested and have appropriate indexes for the breed.

To increase the bottom line, know the market characteristics of the product to be sold within the next 12 to 18 months.

Contact: *George Rock*
(780) 986-8985

Agricultural Technology Centre opens

In order to expand client services for the agriculture industry in such areas as production, conservation and the environment, the former Alberta Farm Machinery Research Centre has a new name, a new image and new goals.

Operated by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the facility was officially renamed the Agricultural Technology Centre on January 8, 2001.

"From its roots in equipment evaluation, the expansion into technology development and technology transfer was a natural progression allowing the Centre to evolve along with the machinery industry," says Lund. "This is the right time to look at the bigger picture and offer new services and technology in a new way. It just makes good business sense."

"We are excited about this new era for the organization," adds Rick Atkins, manager of the Centre. "We took a good look at how our clients' needs for services have changed. We also looked at what impact the Centre's work was having on environmental stewardship, crop diversification and livestock development and decided the timing was right to change the name and focus to reflect the expertise and diverse capabilities of the people and facilities located in Lethbridge."

In the past 12 years, the Centre has conducted approximately:

- 145 evaluations
- 99 research projects
- 156 development projects
- 34 fabrication projects
- 57 computer/electronics projects
- 30 trade shows
- 100+ facility tours by students, producers and researchers from around the world
- 1000+ distribution of evaluation reports
- 200+ presentations to producers, students and technical conferences
- 4000+ direct client consultations; and
- placed a wealth of information on Alberta Agriculture's website at **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca>**.

Machinery and technology has a significant place in the agricultural economy. This sector currently represents a $2.5 billion dollar industry and employs 10,000 people in western Canada.

Cont'd on page 4

With the Centre's new focus, continued emphasis will be placed on water quality, sustainable expansion of intensive livestock operations, conservation of soil and water resources under various cropping systems and a wide variety of emerging issues.

Contact:	*Michael Lohner*	*Rick Atkins*
	(780) 427-2137	*(403) 329-1212*

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

New AGC members

The Alberta Grain Commission is pleased to announce two new members of the Alberta Grain Commission (AGC):

- Lloyd Annable has an irrigated grain and cow-calf operation at Carmangay.
- Harry Schudlo farms at Sexsmith.

Annable and Schudlo are active in community and industry organizations and boards. They are replacing Gil Balderston of Sexsmith and Dan Cutforth of Barons who recently ended six years with the AGC.

The membership of the Commission is now comprised of:

- Lloyd Annable
  Carmangay, Alberta – farmer member
- Ray Bassett
  Edmonton, Alberta – department member
- Eugene Dextrase
  High Level, Alberta – farmer member
- Pat Durnin
  Kathyrn, Alberta – farmer member
- Murray McLelland
  Lacombe, Alberta – department member
- Ken Moholitny
  Edmonton, Alberta – department member (Chairman)
- Ken Motiuk
  Mundare, Alberta – farmer member
- Terry Niemela
  Eckville, Alberta – farmer member
- Harry Schudlo
  Sexsmith, Alberta – farmer member

The AGC looks forward to continuing working with the grains industry as part of its mandate to maintain liaison with other governments, groups or boards within and outside Alberta. This supports the rest of the AGC mandate from the Alberta Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, which is to examine all facets of the grain, oilseeds and special crop industry, make policy recommendations and carry out related assignments.

Contact: Julie Toma
(780) 427-3080

AgVenture workshops

From Ideas to Opportunities – those looking for new production and marketing alternatives, but not sure where to start or what the right venture is, the answers may be found at the AgVenture workshops offered throughout the province in 2001.

"AgVenture workshops, sponsored by the Agricultural Business Management Branch, are organized by industry development specialists of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development," says Lori-Jo Graham, business development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Olds. "The goal of the workshops is to help farm families understand and assess diversification opportunities at a early stage."

Business failure rates range from 20 to 50 per cent in the first two years, so planning and evaluating the feasibility of a business before plowing in full steam ahead is essential. These workshops are designed to assist participants to evaluate: the options, market risks and opportunities, expectations of costs and returns, and whether this is the right venture for them to pursue.

"Marketing is a major focus of these workshops," adds Graham. "Farmers and ranchers are usually keen on production information. They are used to asking questions such as: can it grow here?; how can growth be optimized?; and, are any specialized equipment or facilities needed? It stands to reason that without a market for a product, whether its organic carrots, borage or back-country trail rides, a new venture will not be profitable."

Workshop topics vary with location, as do speakers. Experienced producers and processors, business consultants, agriculture specialists and buyers will share ideas and tips. Participants will have a chance to make new contacts, view displays and meet the people working in the industry.

AgVenture Workshops 2001 (as well as contacts for registration and further information):

Introduction to Organic and Natural Farming

- St. Paul
  January 25 Slav Heller (780) 645-6301

Pursuing Market Opportunities in the Beef Industry

(speakers vary at each location, contact 1-800- 387-6030 for specific information)

• Airdrie	February 6
• Red Deer	February 7
• Wetaskiwin	February 8
• Coronation	February 9

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Tiffin Conference Series... Planning to Prosper

(options in hemp, medicinal herbs, aquaculture, organics, bison, value adding)

- Lethbridge
  February 20 & 21 Jan Warren (403) 485-2236

Agri-tourism

- Wainwright
  March 6 Leona Reyonds-Zayak (780) 853-8101

Livestock Diversification

- Fairview
  March 7 Tim Keating (780) 837-2211

Taking the Mystery Out of Market Research

- Wetaskiwin
  March 21 Marian Williams (780) 679-1360

Buyers Forum: Where's the Market in Diversified Crops?

- Red Deer
  March 27 Lisa Houle (403) 340-5369

All Alberta Agriculture offices can be contacted toll free by first dialing 310-0000.

Contact: Lori-Jo Graham
(403) 556-4244

Agri-News Briefs

Growing and selling horticulture crops

A 2-day technical session on ***Introduction to Growing and Selling Horticulture Crops*** will be presented at Two Hills Community Hall on January 23 and 24, 2001. Sessions include an introduction to commercial production and marketing of field vegetables crops; greenhouse crops; strawberry, raspberry, saskatoon, other small fruit crops; and, special crops such as echinacea, borage and hemp. Other topics on the agenda are: organic farming overview and organic production standards; on-farm food safety; farm business structure and taxes; opportunities in value-added and processing; and, marketing options including marketing to restaurants. Admission is free. Registration is accepted at the door. For more information, phone (780) 415-2304.

Bedding plants production workshop

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development staff, in cooperation with staff from ARC, have organized a ***Bedding Plant Production Workshop***. The workshop will be held on February 15, 2001 from 10:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m at the Crop Diversification Centre North, 17507 Fort Road, Edmonton. This workshop is designed both for the beginners and advanced growers of bedding plants and potted material. The topics will range from seeds and seed germination, understanding fertilizing practices, basic cultural practices and pest management methods. In addition, growers will get an opportunity to discuss issues related to increase in heating costs. The workshop is sponsored by the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA). Cost is $40 for AGGA members and $50 for non-members (includes GST and lunch). Further information, contact Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza at (780) 415-2303 or email <**mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca**>.

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Growing Global

The ***Growing Global*** conference is being held in Edmonton at the Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre on March 5 to 7, 2001. Presentations at the conference will deal with topics such as: organic certification standards for Canada and U.S.A.; the global overview on what's happening in medicinals and aromatics; healing animals through medicinal herbs; homeopathic animal treatments; medicinal herbs and new federal government initiatives; industry development issues for medicinals, aromatics and organics; Canadian special crops with medicinal properties; essential oils; organic livestock potential; value-adding to organic products and getting them on the shelf; and, resources for businesses interested in processing and value-adding. The conference will also be hosting a trade show and poster session on March 6 and 7. For information about booth participation at the trade show, contact Alan Dooley at (780) 422-2559. Conference registration is $200.00/person on or before February 9th; after that date, it will be $250.00/person. Student registration is available for $50.00. Single day registration is available for $150.00/person. For further information or to receive an agenda/registration form, contact the Crop Diversification Centre North at (780) 422-1789. Information is also available on the conference website at: <**http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/conference/organic-herb.html**>

Vegetable production course

The ***2001 Entry Level Vegetable Production Course*** is being held at the Red Deer Lodge, Red Deer, on February 6, 2001. The one-day course has three main focuses: development of the business; handling of the crop; and, insect and weed pests. Specific topics on business development include: marketing avenues; production costs and returns; necessary management skills; on-farm food safety; site location; soil, irrigation and equipment. Discussion points on post-harvest handling, will deal with pre-cooling, washing, packaging and storage. Pre-registration for the course is $50 per person for Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA) members and $70 per person for non-members. Registration at the door is available and is $60 per person for AMGA members and $80 per person for non-members. Please send your name and address along with a cheques, made payable to AMGA Course Account, to AMGA, CDCS, SS 4, Brooks, AB T1R 1E6. For further information, contact Belinda Choban, vegetable extension specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton, (780) 415-2304.

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Agri-News

January 29, 2001

Triticale, different from other cereals

One crop that has been an 'up-and-comer' for the past 20 years is triticale. It was touted as a crop that was going to increase in silage acres in the 1980's and people are still discovering its merits. Many Alberta producers wonder why it hasn't taken off as predicted.

"Probably one of the main reasons is that we haven't really understood how to manage this species properly," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Triticale is different from other cereals, so we can't use the same criteria for managing it."

Triticale has a wider harvest window. It maintains optimum moisture for making silage for a much longer time than barley. However, that does not explain what happens to quality over that time period. Generally, plants accumulate more energy when given a longer period to photosynthesize. They also increase in biomass, but some of that biomass is fibre and insoluble carbohydrates. These are the parts that decrease the digestibility of forages. As with other crops, per cent protein decreases as it gets more mature but it accumulates more protein in total.

"Research has shown that triticale silage can have excellent energy and digestible protein content," adds Hockridge. "In theory, this should translate into good performance from livestock. However, some farmers have experienced poorer results than they expected with some classes of livestock. It is not always easy to pinpoint what has gone wrong."

Time of cutting is important for any forage. Most cereal silages are cut at the soft dough to mid-dough stage. Moisture is ideal at that time and it seems to represent the best balance between yield and quality. Research on triticale has not been clear. Initial results from some experiments suggested it should be cut earlier. Further testing has shown this to not necessarily be true.

"Researchers agree that there has to be some head filling before cutting, but triticale does not mature at the same rate as barley," says Hockridge. "The key to quality seems to lie in how quickly the head is developing, relative to the rate of fibre accumulation in the stem. This is more critical for animals that are expected to perform than for cows that just need to be maintained."

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Length of cut is also a factor that is often overlooked. Tests with other forages have shown that material passes through cattle more quickly when it is cut shorter. This allows animals to extract more nutrients from feed in a given time period. Forages that are cut too short lead to more digestive problems in ruminant animals. Triticale has a harder stem to cut than other cereals so there may be more situations where the length of cut is not appropriate.

"There still seems to be a promising future for triticale. It yields about 20 per cent more than barley, has good protein levels and will withstand more adverse conditions," concludes Hockridge. "It also provides a break in the disease cycle when barley is a major part of the rotation and it stands up well. However, it should be viewed as a different crop and managed according to its own set of criteria."

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

APIEP continues to provide summer employment for students

The *Agricultural Processing Industry Employment Program* (APIEP) provides employment opportunities for career-related experience and skill training in Alberta's processing industry for at least 30 students from May 1 to August 31, 2001. Processors who hire a student for the summer are reimbursed for one-third of the employee's salary, up to $500 per month and to a maximum of $2,000 for the summer.

"The APIEP is funded by Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) and administered by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development," says Christine Paproski, program delivery specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "The program began in the summer of 1996. Pending confirmation of funding from AHRE in early March, the program will be running again in the summer of 2001."

Employers must be the owner of a value-added processing business, located in Alberta. Students must be attending a post-secondary institution, enrolled in a degree, diploma, or certificate program (returning to school in the fall), and may not be a relative of the employer. Employment must provide career-related experience for the student and must be full-time for at least four continuous weeks within the program period.

"The program is valuable for both the processor and the student," adds Paproski. "Companies are able to hire qualified summer help at reduced cost and students gain valuable experience that may help them in attaining future employment."

Over 200 processors in the province were sent an application package on January 15, 2001. Processors who did not receive a package and who want to be added to the mailing list should contact Paproski at (780) 427-3124. Employers have until the end of April to recruit a student and submit their completed application.

Further details regarding program guidelines and application forms are available on the Alberta Agriculture website at: **<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/programs/ag_processing.html>**.

Contact: Christine Paproski
(780) 427-3124

Explaining the bankers' annual review process

Part three of a three-part series

When going through the annual review process, the credit institution will be assessing the risk associated with a business. To do this, the credit institutes (CI's) will assess a business's management ability, financial results for the previous and upcoming year, the margins on, and type of, security they have in place, and more. Part one of this three-part series (*Agri-News January 15, 2001*), discussed how the CI assesses a farm management team's ability, and thereby rates the management risk associated with the farm business. It also explained the CI's risk vs. return interest rate and fee pricing strategies. Part two of the series (*Agri-News January 22, 2001*), explained how CI's review financial information to determine the financial risk associated with a farm. This article will describe other risks a CI will rate an operation on.

"In reviewing security risk, the CI will be checking all of the security they hold to cover each of the business's loans," says Ron Lyons P.Ag., financial management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agricultural Business Management Branch, Olds. "They will look to see if all the margins, between the loan balances plus accrued interest and the market value of the security for the loans are within their security guidelines. Normally they look for a 25 to 35 per cent margin on land and buildings. The same percentage holds true for equipment, breeding stock, and marketable inventory such as cattle and grain. Fifty per cent is usually used for feed and supplies. Higher risk operations will be expected to put up more security for loans than lower risk operations."

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CI's normally like to have at least a 25 per cent margin on their mortgage security. For instance if a farm business has a quarter section worth $200,000, the CI will not want to have more than $150,000 in loans outstanding against that quarter section, unless other security is given to offset the margin shortfall.

If land market values have dropped over the past year, putting their mortgage security margins out of their security guidelines, they may be ask the farm business to provide additional security to cover the shortfall. On the other hand, if land values have increased significantly over the past year or two, a business may be entitled to have some mortgage security partially discharged. This should be negotiated with the CI each year. It's important to remember, however, that once mortgage or other security has been discharged, it costs time and money to have the security put back into place, if the need for additional funds occurs in the future. Also, upon the discharge of some security, an operation may be placed into a higher risk category and be subject to higher interest rates and service fees. This will have to be negotiated when the discharge is requested.

"An important factor is whether the farm has enough market livestock, grain or forage for sale, and feed supplies on hand to cover the operating loan and provide the required margin," adds Lyons. "The security for operating loans is usually covered by one or more general security agreements. There is both provincial, and federal, general security agreements. They all have different assets that they can cover from just market livestock and grain, to all owned assets. This issue will need to be addressed with the CI representative to make sure the right general security agreement is in place to meet the farm business's needs. CI's always like to err on the side of more security rather than less, so it is up to the individual to ask."

Another risk factor to consider is environmental risk. For instance, an intensified livestock operation should have strategies in place to mitigate (reduce) the environmental risk associated with your operation. Important risk factors in determining the environmental risk associated with a property include: production facilities located on a creek, river, or lake; an oil or gas well drilled on the property that was not cleaned up properly; an environmentally unfriendly intensive production facility, agricultural or industry, located nearby that affects the property; buried fuel storage tanks on the property that may have leaked; old garbage dumpsites; and, old vehicles and equipment storage on or near the property. In some cases the CI may not accept a parcel of land for security because the environmental risk is too high.

"Cash flow risk and access to funds is another important risk assessed by CI's," says Lyons. "If a business has a bad price or production year, would it have the savings, or do the owners have a relative or friend that could help the business through the bad times? When a cash flow plan is done for the upcoming year, are there times during the year when an operating loan does not cover the cash shortfall? Does the operating loan achieve a zero balance at any time during the year? If not, is a larger operating loan needed, or is it more important to restructure loans, cash in-flow, or out-flow in some way to make it work out? Has the operation undergone a change in the principal enterprise that has changed the cash-in flow frequency or timing? Reviewing the business's cash flow before attending an annual review meeting with the CI representative is always a good idea. Having a cash flow report completed will put the business in a good position to answer these types of questions, and to suggest the changes that may be required to make the cash flow work out."

In determining the overall risk associated with an account, the business will get a better risk rating if the owners are principally involved in a supply managed industry, as these industries have lower volatility and are very stable.

"If you ever plan to incorporate the operation, make sure to work with an accountant to select a fiscal year end date that will show the operation's financial ratios at their best, and give consideration to the best date for tax planning," says Lyons. "The better the ratios are at the time of annual review, the lower the risk rating. With a lower risk rating, you should be able to negotiate lower interest rates and service fees. This saves a lot of money over the years."

Knowing all of the facts contained within this series of three articles, will enable Alberta farm managers get through their next annual review with their CI without too much trouble. They will know how to show their financial information and management strategies on their operation in the best possible way. This will enable them to negotiate the best possible deal from their CI for the upcoming year.

Contact: *Ron Lyons P.Ag.*
Phone: 403-556-4236
E-mail: ronald.lyons@gov.ab.ca

Marketing strategies in the new millennium

Many growers, especially new ones, are inclined to start production without giving a second thought to the business of marketing. Good marketing is an absolute must for a successful agricultural enterprise. Some would even argue that it ranks higher in importance than production itself – especially for farmers planning to diversify. After all, what good is a product if one cannot sell it consistently for a profit?

"Diversification out of commodity crops may mean becoming familiar with, or even creating new marketing systems," says Janice McGregor, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Morinville. "Existing marketing channels very often do not accommodate

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the new producer well - especially the small producer. Small farmers are the most likely to develop and use innovative marketing methods. Prospects for direct farmer-consumer interaction are particularly promising at the rural-urban fringe, where producers can take advantage of specialty market niches and the demand for local and regional food items, while promoting agricultural tourism and education."

Marketing does not begin after production, but well before the first seed is planted. Marketing is not just about selling. It requires a clear and astute understanding of what consumers want and the ability to deliver it to them through the most appropriate channels for a profit. A good marketing strategy begins with making sure the enterprise is right for you and is feasible.

When developing a marketing strategy, gather information about sources, marketing, production, processing, packaging and sales; read marketing publications and attend marketing courses or conferences. Visit local specialty stores and supermarkets to see what is selling, and why certain products appear more appealing than others. Talk to customers. Find out what they want. Determine if there is an unfilled niche. Then ask yourself whether your production, labour and marketing resources will fill this niche.

"The marketing environment will ultimately exert a strong influence on the nature of a business," says McGregor. "Crops grown will be determined less by the farmer's personal tastes than by what the market will absorb at the price the farmer is willing to take. A good market plan broadly aims to define the consumer, the products or services they want and the most effective promotion and advertising strategies for reaching those consumers."

Keep up with trends. Flexibility allows a business to adapt a product mix to market fashion. You have to be the first to capture or create the next hot thing. Read what your customer is reading. Food trade magazines in particular offer great information. Another source may be medical research on the health benefits of various foods.

Marketing objectives are typically set in such areas as profit, sales, volume, market share, pricing, advertising and promotion. Producers need to determine an overall strategy to achieve their objectives. Four basic market strategy positions can be employed by producers:

In a **market penetration** strategy, a grower attempts to fill the need of an existing market with its present product mix. A grower may wish to increase the number of customers in present markets or to increase the consumption of a particular product or commodity by both present and future customers. In addition, the grower also wants to prevent competitors from taking away present customers.

A **market development** strategy is one where the grower attempts to find new markets for existing products. The grower hopes to find new uses and/or new customers in new markets for crops that are already being produced and marketed. It is possible for growers to employ market penetration and market development strategies at the same time since they involve the same products the grower is currently producing with only the markets differing.

A **product development** strategy exists when the grower attempts to produce new crops or varieties for customers in present markets. A number of approaches can be used here as well. A product improvement may involve a new crop (variety) actually replacing an existing crop that is slipping in the market. The new crop could be less expensive to produce, more appealing or serve customer's needs better. More products, wider variety or selection of products or different forms (processed) of products will appeal to more customers. With this type of strategy, the grower wants to make a better impression in a present market through product changes and/or additions.

A **diversification** strategy occurs when the grower attempts to attract new groups of customers by moving into totally new markets with new products. This might involve taking a new crop (variety) that was developed for present markets to totally new markets that the business did not previously serve. With this approach the grower hopes to move into markets not served with new products. Diversification is the most risky of the four strategies because it involves departure from both the product and market experience of the farm.

"Determining the most effective product mix (crops, varieties, pack sizes etc.) to serve each market segment should be based on costs of production and buyer demand," says McGregor. "Communication between the grower and buyer is essential for success. Attending to customer needs can assist growers in maintaining their individual market share. It is this constant evaluation and performance analysis that provides opportunity for growers to alter their approaches to meet the changing needs of their customers."

Explore Direct – Marketing Rural Alberta Products Direct to Consumers is a marketing conference being held on February 26 to 27, 2001 at the Nisku Inn, Nisku. For further information on the conference, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 422-1789, Edmonton, toll free in Alberta by dialling 310-0000, first.

Contact: *Janice McGregor*
(780) 939-4351
<janice.mcgregor@gov.ab.ca>

Innovative, community-based approach to rural tourism

When it comes to tourist attractions, in recent years, people have become more interested in experiencing rural life and various local approaches to doing things.

"Tourism doesn't have to be built around a man-made or natural attraction – it can also focus on the experience," says Sharon Homeniuk, rural development specialist - business, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stony Plain.

The upcoming ***Growing Rural Tourism*** conference will provide Alberta communities with the tools to work collectively to grow rural tourism in their own areas. Conference speakers will focus on the opportunities for rural communities to gain an economic advantage through tourism. The coordinated approach used by these experts will stimulate participants to recognize opportunities they never thought possible.

Bill McMillan, a partner with Equus Consulting, has worked with many communities and regions, supporting their efforts to create value through tourism. He has worked with several regions of Alberta to develop partnership approaches to economic development and shared strategic investment. He will lead two presentations, *Discover Your Target Markets and Build Your Advantage* and *Tourism Assets: The 10 Best Ways to Attract Tourists*.

Working hands-on during these sessions, participants will discover practical steps that will enable them to work together to realize opportunities that exist in their communities for developing tourism. Tools and methods for thinking about rural tourism that are easy to apply to communities will be explored. Working in a fun, interactive atmosphere, will provide participants with insight on how to gain the most advantage from their investment in tourism.

Bill Reynolds, director of Tourism Product Development with Alberta Economic Development, will open the second day with *Innovation and Ideas for Rural Tourism*. This session will provide insights into rural tourism best practices. Reinforcing other concepts, this session provides thought-provoking examples of successes in rural tourism that have happened elsewhere with small rural entrepreneurs. Reynolds will discuss the four key supply trends and talk about how to craft an experience based on what we *know* visitors are looking for instead of what we *think* they want. Participants will be challenged to identify assets in their community and region, particularly as it relates to the people in the area. They will have a chance to look at their own communities to ensure that the experience they are offering is unique and stands out from others.

The ***Growing Rural Tourism*** conference is an initiative of the Camrose Regional Exhibition, Alberta Economic Development, Travel Alberta and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. It is being held in Camrose on February 13 and 14, 2001.

Anyone involved in their rural community who wants to take the next step to develop and create an economic advantage for their community through tourism, is encouraged to attend. The conference will be of interest to those who have a direct stake in the tourism industry and believe their operation can be improved by tying into something bigger and more regional in focus. Communities are encouraged to send several delegates from various sectors to fully capitalize on the information offered.

For more information, or to register for this exciting new conference, contact the ***Growing Rural Tourism*** conference office at (780) 488-9497 or toll-free at 1-866-488-9497. Information is also available by e-mailing <**millmgt@aol.com**>. More information and a registration form are available on the internet at <**www.tourismtogether.com**>, or <**www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify**> under agri-tourism.

Contact: *Sharon Homeniuk*
(780) 963-6101

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Production and marketing conference

FARMTECH 2001 will be held in Red Deer at the Westerner on January 31, February 1 and 2, 2001. ***FARMTECH*** is an annual update on crop production, marketing and sustainable farming in Alberta. The trade show is organized around keynote speakers who will address current agricultural issues. Concurrent sessions discuss specific questions on marketing, canola production, pulse production, direct seeding, crop rotation, environment, technology and other crop production and management issues. For further information, contact Sandra Taillieu, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. Information is also available on the conference website at <http://www.farmtechconference.com/>.

Functional foods seminar

The Business of Functional Foods Seminar is being held on March 5, 2001 at the Ramada Hotel & Conference Centre, Edmonton. The program covers the opportunities, the science, the regulations and the resources for functional food products and processes. Seminar highlights include: a presentation by Stephen DeFelice, M.D., a founder and leader of the nutraceutical movement; discussion of Canadian commodities with natural health-promoting qualities; an update on European trends and research; and, the latest word on the resources and regulations affecting foods with health claims. A joint reception with the ***Growing Global*** conference will be held in the evening to conclude the seminar and begins the conference. For further information or to register, contact Connie Philips at (780) 980-4865 or Brenda McIntyre at (780) 495-4143.

Poultry industry conference

The 50th Annual Poultry Industry Conference is being held on February 26 to 28, 2001 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. Annual meetings of the Alberta Chicken Producers, Alberta Egg Producers Board, Alberta Hatching Egg Board and the Alberta Turkey Producers will be held in conjunction with the conference. The official launch of An EGGcellent Journey, a new, innovative, high-tech and interactive display showcasing the egg industry in Alberta will take place on February 26 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. RSVP for the display launch is requested before February 16, 2001. For further information, contact Crystal Park at (403) 250-1197 or e-mail <altaegg@telusplanet.net>.

2001 farm community website

Agri-ville, an interactive farm community website, has a new look, new features and a new user-friendly format. Agri-ville offers on-line learning opportunities for farmers and ranchers. It has added a Spiritual Vignettes Meeting Room to the existing nine meeting rooms and now includes an interactive poll called Questions of the Week where members can vote on issues impacting their livelihood. It is a site where farmers and ranchers can share ideas and ask questions of their prairie farm neighbors. Another added feature is the Agri-ville.com store. It offers farmers, ranchers and smaller manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers risk free, low-cost solutions to selling on-line. For more information, visit the Agri-ville.com website at <**http://www.agri-ville.com**> or contact Delin Sheehan-Millang at (403) 556-2774 or e-mail <**mayor@agri-ville.com**>.

Devonian education program

The Devonian Botanic Garden (DBG) education program for January to July 2001 is now available. The program covers evening, weekend and day courses available through the DBG, just outside of Edmonton. Courses being offered include: children's programs; family programs, adult programs, commercial horticulture; horticulture and nature study; and nature arts and crafts. For more information, a free course brochure, or to register for courses, contact (780) 987-2064.

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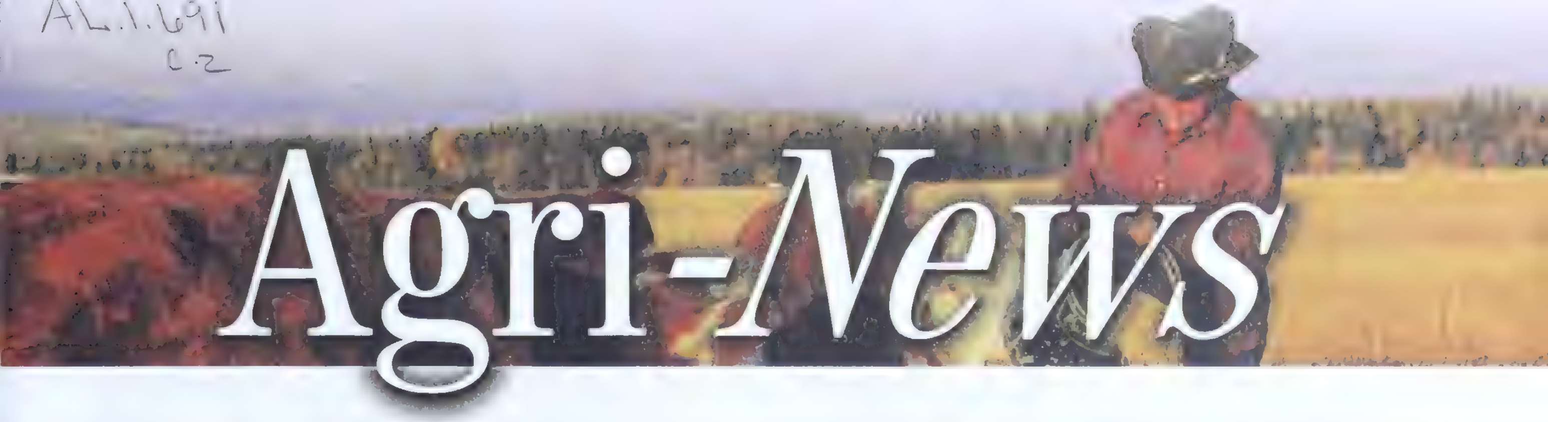

Agri-News

February 5, 2001

What is IPM?

The Canola Council of Canada (CCC), provincial canola producer organizations, government agencies and industry, are initiating an Integrated pest management (IPM) program for canola as a result of the prairie-wide CCC survey conducted in the spring of 2000. One of the key benefits of an IPM program is that it will provide up-to-date information on pest management practices that can improve economic returns from canola production.

"IPM is a way of approaching pest management that combines biological, genetic, cultural and chemical tools yet minimizes economic, health and environmental risks," says Jay Byer, cereal and oilseeds specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Bonnyville. "It is not a new approach to managing pests, but by focusing on prevention, monitoring and forecasting, intervention and record keeping, this integrated approach helps producers achieve effective pest management in the safest manner."

Growers are in an information seeking mode and are willing to change if it is economically feasible to do so. One of the challenges to wider acceptance of IPM methods is to show that the techniques are available and are effective. The CCC survey identified the top three barriers to adopting IPM as: the ineffectiveness of non-chemical control methods; economics; and, lack of knowledge about non-chemical control methods.

"Many IPM practices are already being used by producers," adds Byer. "Management practices such as three to four year canola rotations, using pedigreed seed, using treated seed, herbicide rotations, and shallow tillage for weed control just prior or during planting are commonly used."Future aims for IPM are that additional gains will be made when more IPM methods are employed. The study, completed in 2000, established a baseline for measuring producer adoption of IPM and has identified areas for future educational program focus. Implications and recommendations arising from the study include:

- designing producer education programs on IPM practices, focusing on an IPM decision-making process and addressing barriers to adoption;
- investigating the impact of pest management decisions on cost of production through long-term record tracking and controlled economic case studies;
- developing an IPM self-assessment – best practices checklist. This would generate a list of priority recommendations for producers based on basic management practices;

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- conducting further agronomic research in the areas of variety and pest resistance, pesticide technology, non-chemical control methods, research into cyclical outbreaks of specific pests, and pest control under conservation tillage regimes; and,
- communicating the results of this survey to the research community, extension services and canola growers.

"Producers constantly face decisions that directly impact their bottom line," says Byer. "Information and research into IPM methods that can help make some of those decisions easier and more predictable will benefit everyone."

Contact: Jay Byer
(780) 826-6295

Cropping plans for 2001

Commodity prices for traditional crops are not exceptional and it is expected that input costs will be higher than last year. To top it off, there's a lot of uncertainty about how much natural gas prices will affect fertilizers. Still, farmers will plant a crop this year. The decisions they will face in the next few weeks will centre on what crops to plant.

Deciding what to grow is the first step," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Most farmers follow a crop rotation with most of their acres and swing to a little more concentration on whatever will be a paying crop in the current year. It still makes sense to follow a rotation since that's the cheapest way to reduce disease, insect and weed problems."

Canola has been dominant the past few years, so maybe it is time to put those extra acres into cereals for a while. While returns may not be especially exciting in that area, it gets the farm business back to a more normal rotation. It may also be wise to consider the type of crop that can be used on your own operation, or sold close to home. Some producers are taking a long hard look at putting more land into perennial forage.

"Weed control is something that has to be done to get a decent crop," adds Hockridge. "Crop rotations and silage will reduce herbicide costs. Tillage may have a place, too. However, net returns should be more of a determining factor than reduced costs."

The amount of fertilizer to apply will be one of the biggest questions this year. With commodity prices low and input costs high, it seems natural to cut back on the inputs that cost money. However, for the past couple of years, the lowest cost of production often occurred on fields that yielded the best. Costs and returns still have to be pencilled out.

"Marketing could be even more important this year," says Hockridge. "Locking in prices during rallies is a good first step, but you may have to look to specialty items and commodities that customers want. Specialty oil varieties of canola is one example, but other crops that meet a specialty market could also apply."

Traditional prairie crops have been under pressure for a few years now. New crops may not be suited for some Alberta land and weather conditions, or the market for them may be too small to make much difference on prairie economics. Taking advantage of the little things may make a difference to the bottom line of an individual farmer though. All of these market, production and environmental factors mean that farmers have more to consider when making decisions on this year's cropping plans.

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

New rural hazard management program

The North American Farm and Environmental Safety Centre and its partners are helping farmers and ranchers make Alberta a safer place to work and live. Through a new initiative called the ***Rural Hazard Management Program***, the team will provide safety training and encouragement to farm families, conduct farmer-requested safety reviews and provide safety courses tailored to producers' needs. The program, funded primarily by Health Canada, is designed to help reduced injuries and save lives.

"Serious injury or loss of life can drain the energy and joy of living, right out of a farm family," says the program coordinator, Ron McMullin, Raymond. "The results of a serious accident on the farm makes bushels, tons or money look pretty insignificant. Putting time and resources into protecting people, yields some of the most valuable returns a farmer can get – peace of mind and well-being of family members."

The success of the new Rural Hazard Management Program depends heavily on the cooperation of producer associations and commodity groups. Encouragement from fellow farmers and ranchers to think safety, coupled with efforts to rid the farm of hazards and to reduce risks, will make Alberta farms and ranches safer workplaces.

Producer organizations supporting the Rural Hazard Management Program will invite farm families to attend safety seminars to be held across the province. Producers attending the seminar will be able to request a safety review where the producer and a trained specialist will identify and rate hazards on the farm or ranch.

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"Sometimes, it takes an outside pair of eyes to recognize these hazards that are a routine part of the scenery on the farm," says Kim Hardy, safety specialist with the Lethbridge Community College. "Once a list of hazards is in-hand, the producer can put a plan in motion to make the farm a safer place for the farm family, any employees and visitors."

The College will also present a variety of safety courses targeted at producer needs throughout Alberta. The courses will be designed in consultation with producer groups and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and will include information gathered through the safety reviews. The courses will help producers make their farm or ranch a safer place to work and play.

"Producers will be able to choose from a number of courses," says Hardy. "The courses are not just general overviews of safety, but get into the nitty gritty of specific safety hazards and how to manage them."

Every farmer and rancher wants a safe working environment, but accidents do continue to happen at an alarming rate in Alberta. "If we help save the life of one person or prevent just one serious injury, then the money and effort of this project will be well spent," says McMullin.

"Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Farm Safety Program is pleased to be involved with this program," says Solomon Kyeremanteng, manager farm safety program, Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "We applaud the efforts of the Centre and its program partners. We encourage even more agencies to join forces and take up the farm safety cause. Always remember, ***A Safe Farm is a Great Place to Grow!***"

Contact: *Solomon Kyeremanteng* *(780) 427-4227*
Ron McMullin *(403) 752-4585*
Kim Hardy *(403) 320-3319*

Towards a market focus: The changing face of agriculture

"Like many western Canadians, I grew up listening to stories about the tough times of the 1930's. My grandparent's didn't get to town very often and when they did, their grocery list was limited to flour, salt, sugar and a few other staples," says Ted Darling, farm management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "Everything else was either grown in the garden, raised as livestock or harvested as wild game. In the cities and towns, the fare might have been a bit different, but essentially, consumers bought whatever farmers were able to produce.

"If my grandmother could have seen a present-day supermarket, she would have been completely astounded. The few items she was familiar with would be lost in the huge selection of food products of every possible description. What's more, she'd never have been able to understand that, while they spent every nickel on the bare necessities, a modern consumer's food budget amounts to only about 10 per cent of their income."

The contrast between now and then is incredible. The old system dealt almost exclusively with commodities: meat, milk, vegetables and fruit went directly from the farm to the consumer with scarcely a middleman in sight. In contrast, the 21st century consumer hardly ever sees commodities in their unprocessed form. They appreciate the convenience and array of choices that our current system delivers, and are willing to pay for them. In addition, the marketplace has gone from a ***seller's market***, where food was often in short supply, to a ***buyer's market*** where food products are varied, plentiful and relatively cheap."

From a producer's point of view, only part of the picture has changed. Productivity and efficiency have skyrocketed, but commodities leaving the farm gate are still much the same as they were 70 years ago. Adjusted for inflation, prices for these commodities have fallen consistently due to industry's continuing ability to produce high volumes at low cost.

"Not quite so obvious is the reduction in farmers' share of consumers' food expenditures," adds Darling. "Seventy years ago, producers received the lion's share of every food dollar spent by consumers. Today, the major costs of food production are processing, packaging, distribution and marketing, while the primary producer's share is often measured in pennies. Well-managed and well-financed commodity operations will continue to be profitable since they're usually able to grow larger and achieve economies of scale. Small and medium-sized producers are under financial pressure and many are being forced to re-evaluate their businesses."

There may be only two basic strategies for future growth and profitability: large-scale, low-cost commodity production and the production and marketing of differentiated niche-market products.

"For smaller operations, joining with other producers in some type of business arrangement may make commodity production feasible, but otherwise, a move to a specialized product may be the best option," says Darling. "It's a fairly safe bet that small and medium-sized farms that produce only commodities will continue to fight an uphill battle."

The agriculture industry continues to change rapidly, and with change comes both risk and opportunity. For farm business owners and managers, the risk is in being caught unprepared. The opportunity is to begin positioning their businesses to take advantage of whatever the 21st century may bring.

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For further information, contact Darling at (403) 948- 8524 or e-mail <**ted.darling@gov.ab.ca**>.

This is article one of a ten-part series *Towards a Market Focus*. One article will be featured each week in *Agri-News* and will be posted on the Alberta Agriculture website <**www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify**> as they are released.

Contact:	*Ted Darling*	*Laura-Lee Billings*
	(403) 948-8524	*(403) 443-8525*

Lower priced crop insurance for 2001 and hail rebates for 2000

Alberta farmers will be eligible for a 30 per cent reduction in crop insurance premiums with an estimated cost of $20 million for the 2001 crop year. Also, Alberta farmers who purchased straight hail insurance in the 2000 crop year will receive a premium rebate totalling approximately $1.5 million.

The price reduction and rebate will provide assistance to an estimated 15,000 crop insurance clients and more than 7,700 hail insurance clients, many of whom experienced tough business conditions in 2000.

"Lower crop prices and rising input costs have really put a squeeze on the farm's bottom line," says Ty Lund, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "By lowering crop insurance premiums for 2001 and giving a premium rebate on 2000 hail insurance, we're helping farmers reduce their costs and making risk management more accessible."

Sound investment of crop insurance premiums has resulted in interest earnings in the Crop Fund for Alberta that makes this premium reduction possible. This is the second year crop insurance premiums in Alberta have been reduced.

"The premium reduction will make crop insurance more affordable while farmers wait for the Crop Insurance Review Committee's recommendations that will likely address options for increased coverage," says Lund. Smaller changes to crop insurance were announced recently for the 2001 crop year.

For straight hail insurance, Alberta was hit harder with hail storms in 2000 than in previous years, but sufficient contingency funds exist to cover a $1.5 million rebate even after a higher-than-normal claim year. The straight hail policyholders' rebates total 10 per cent of the premium paid for those who didn't have a 2000 claim and five per cent for those with a claim. Mail-out for the premium rebate cheques have already begun.

AFSC is a provincial Crown Corporation that provides farmers and agri-businesses with financial services including crop insurance, farm income disaster protection and farm and agri-business loans.

Crop insurance is cost shared equally between the producer and both the federal and provincial governments. Hail insurance is a self-sustaining farmer funded program.

Contact: *Michael Lohner*
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-2137

Merle Jacobson
Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
(403) 782-8229

Alberta Horse Industry Distinguished Service Award

On January 13, 2001 at the annual Horse Breeders and Owners Conference in Red Deer, the second Distinguished Service Award was presented to Ron and Marg Southern.

"The Distinguished Service Award is given to people who have made significant long term contributions to the development of the horse industry in Alberta," says Les Burwash, head of equine studies with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "It was very fitting that this year's award was presented to Marg and Ron Southern of Spruce Meadows. In their absence, the Southern's daughter, Linda Heathcott accepted the award on their behalf."

Over the past 25 plus years, the Southerns have accomplished many of their goals and those goals generously enhanced the horse industry here in Alberta.

The Southerns have generously dedicated a huge part of their life to developing an environment of legitimacy and success and wholesomeness for the horse industry in Alberta and in North America. In 1975, they opened Spruce Meadows, a project built upon that is now a world class equestrian facility, located on the south side of Calgary. It includes competition rings, stables, indoor riding hall, a trade fair building, a convention centre, sponsor facilities, office buildings, a TV studio and food service facilities. Spruce Meadows as a facility started with the riding hall and the Southerns have built it up project by project over the past 25 years into the world class facility it is today.

Spruce Meadows was built and now operates for the benefit of the horse public. The concept of a privately owned facility operated for public benefit is truly unique. It is open to the public 365 days a year.

Spruce Meadows is not just a facility, it is: world class competitions, entertainment, sportsmanship, celebrations, commerce, ethic cultures, music, food, families, breeds, developing small business and public service.

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Premier features annually held at Spruce Meadows include: The Masters – that brings together the best horses and riders in the world, has the largest prize money in the world; provides TV coverage live to over 20 countries and boasts attendance of over 100,000; Equi-Fair – the most significant horse related trade fair in North America; the Battle of the Breeds – a unique event in which 12 or more breeds have teams in a series of competitions in which "the best breed" is determined in a fun and entertaining manner, this Telus sponsored event has great public interest and prize monies.

To help Alberta build a world class horse breeding industry, Spruce Meadows sponsors unique horse auctions where all horses are pre-selected and buyer protection is the theme. In addition, Ron Southern helped establish and chaired a CEF Drug Testing program for Alberta that still operates today and drug usage in horses and riders is not an issue at Spruce Meadows or anywhere else in Alberta.

In making the presentation, Doug Milligan, acting director of Animal Industry with Alberta Agriculture, had this to say, "One in seven people from all walks of life are involved in horses to some extent whether it's as an owner, working directly with horses or attending equine events. Events at Spruce Meadows have brought commerce and international attention to the province's horse industry. The Southerns are being presented with the Distinguished Service Award for their dedication and efforts to promote equine events and attract world business leaders and a world audience to Alberta."

Contact: *Les Burwash*
(403)948-8538

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Agri-News Briefs

Heart Month

February is Heart Month. The month when we're advised to watch what we eat, exercise a little more, managing stress a little more effectively, cut down or quit smoking and generally be a little kinder to and more considerate of the life-sustaining pump in our chest. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, rising obesity and smoking among young people point to a increasing incidents of heart disease. Advances in medical treatment have cut mortality rates, but heart disease is still taking its toll on Canadians. "The numbers of deaths are increasing, it's still the number one killer among Canadians, accounting for 36 per cent of deaths," says cardiologist Andreas Wielgosz, a spokesman for the Foundation. While factors such as an aging population contribute to the rise in heart disease, the most disturbing, according to Wielgosz, is the declining fitness of Canadian youth. "Young people are more obese today, they're less active." Take a little time this month and consider making a few changes in your diet, add a few more Alberta grown fruits and vegetables, more whole grains, low-fat or non-fat dairy, poultry, lean meats and fish to combat the growing statistics. It's time to eat a little smarter and put a little more motion into life. There are many websites devoted to health issues, Alberta Health and Wellness <**http://www.health.gov.ab.ca/index.html**> (an internal search for 'heart' will bring up a list of heart related articles); the Hearth and Stroke Foundation of Alberta, NWT and Nunavut <**http://www.hsf.ab.ca/**>; Health Canada <**http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/**>; and, Health Central <**http://healthcentralsympatico.com/**>.

Master Gardener program

This year's Master Gardener Program session begins in March 2001 at the Devonian Botanic Garden (DBG), just west of Edmonton. Trainees entering the program should have a high level of interest in gardening and be prepared for an intensive training program, including lectures and homework assignments combined with practical experience. The course begins on March 7 and consists of lectures and class time for 16 Wednesdays until June 20. Subjects covered include: annuals, perennials, herbs, seeds and seed exchange, plant propagation, plant breeding systems, pest control, vegetables, woody ornamentals, landscaping, lawns, botany, and pruning. Upon completion of the lecture component, students must complete 80 hours practicum/volunteer experience by approximately summer of 2002 in order to receive their certificate as a Master Gardener. The program, initiated in 1994, is very well attended. Space is limited, so interested people should apply early. It is necessary to fill out an application prior to acceptance in the course. Registration is $310 and text books are extra. For further information, contact DBG at (780) 987-2064.

Curative powers of blackcurrant

Blackcurrant, known also as Quinsy berry by herbalists, has an impressive list of medicinal properties accredited to it. Its benefits range from curative action on oral and throat ailments; gum strengthening effects; natural treatment for fevers, especially in infants; natural deodorant properties; and it is claimed to be an elixir of life that promotes longevity. Reference books through the ages describe countless natural remedies that demonstrate and promote the beneficial characteristics of blackcurrant. If you are planning on adding a fruit bearing bush to your landscape this year, you may want to consider blackcurrant. Besides the berries being health promoting berry and making great jam and jelly, the attractive shrub grows well in Alberta and is a nice touch to any yard. ***Alberta Yards and Gardens: What to Grow***, an Alberta Agriculture publication, has a section on fruit-bearing bushes. This book is available for sale at all Alberta Agriculture rural advisory service offices and at the Publications Office, located in the J.G. O'Donoghue Building, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. Cost of the publication is $15 plus GST (add $2 plus GST for shipping and handling). To order by phone, call the Canadian toll free line at 1-800-292-5697 or (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area.

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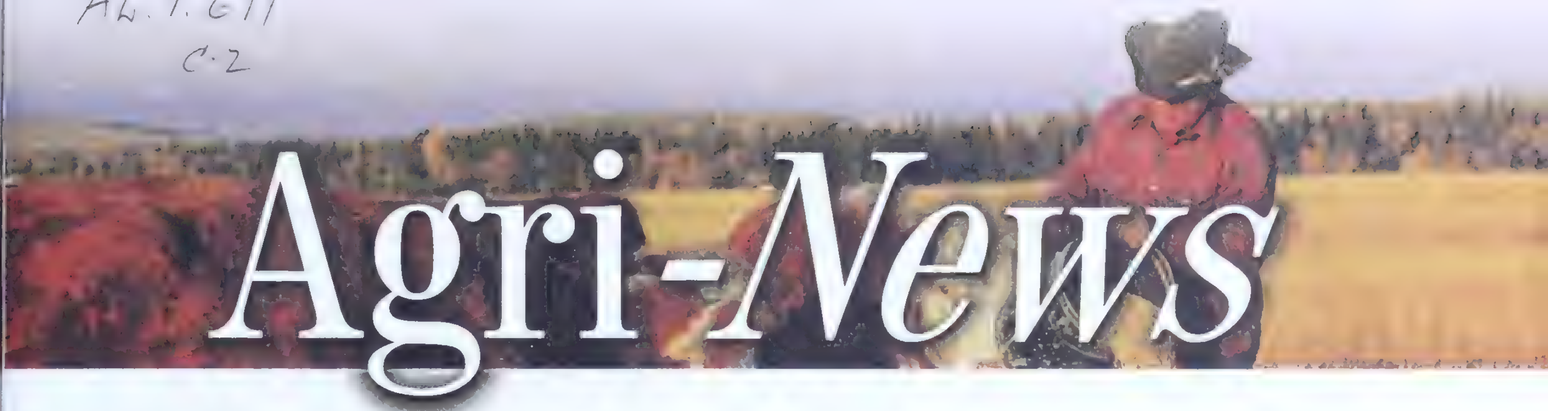

Agri-News

February 12, 2001

Quantity, quality or a mixture of both

The barley competition run by the Alberta Barley Commission seems to represent where the industry is going. Crop producers may remember that not too many years ago the emphasis was on yield. Farmers responded by finding ways to increase yield and still manage the crop. In many cases, manure applications were the key to getting more grain. The development of semi-dwarf varieties and attention to straw strength gave farmers potential to achieve very high yields.

"A few years ago the competition changed to reward quality," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Along with the move to quality there came a recognition that quality means different things in different markets. Now we have varieties coming along that will fill a specific need. People always recognized that malts required certain characteristics. The protein could not be too high, germination rates had to be high, the kernel could not be stained and there were all those other things that maltsters measured in the lab."

Many people recognized that they did not always get the same value out of a bushel of feed barley. While bushel weight used to be the first measure of quality, people in the feeding industry are now more interested in uniformity of plumpness. Other things considered include: to get the most out of the barley, the hull should be cracked; if it is over-processed it can cause digestive problems for cattle; and kernel uniformity helps to ensure all kernels are processed properly.

Hulless barleys were introduced to meet the special needs of monogastric animals. There is a difference between pigs and chickens though, so there has been some effort put into developing products with the needs of each in mind.

"At last year's committee meeting for recommending varieties for registration, three varieties were put forward as suitable for forage production," adds Hockridge. "Whether it is removing awns, increasing the portion of the plant that is leaves, or finding some other characteristic, plant breeders recognize that feed put up as silage or greenfeed has its own requirements."

A lot of thought has to be put into these competitions to lead the industry where it needs to go. There is no such thing as searching for the best variety any more. It has to be the variety and agronomic package that best suits a specified need.

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Planning field shelterbelts

Trees for field shelterbelts or wildlife plantings are provided free by the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA). There's more to planting a successful shelterbelt than just picking up seedlings and popping them into the ground.

Advanced planning goes a long way in ensuring the growth of a healthy shelterbelt. The first steps should be:

- review the present requirements
- assess future needs for shelterbelt protection
- estimate the quality of existing shelterbelts, and
- plan new shelterbelts for unprotected areas of the field

"Probably the best way to start planning for a shelterbelt is to map out the field or site," says Don George, conservation technician with PFRA, Vegreville. "Mark out locations of existing trees, sloughs, buildings, farm access roads and power lines. Then draw in the prevailing wind directions and make note of areas where excessive snow accumulates and causes problems."

Keep all trees at least 30 metres (100 feet) from main buildings and driveways. This eliminates problems with snow buildup. On the planning map, mark the distance around the perimeter of the yard to indicate where the closest field shelterbelts can safely be planted. Check with the county to determine minimum set back distances from municipal roads. Alberta Infrastructure also has regulations that must be followed if planting next to highways, so check for any that are applicable to the site in question.

"Once the area is mapped out, the next thing is to prepare the site. This is something that must be done before the trees arrive," says George. "Get rid of competition so the new trees have the best chance of survival. Make sure to have a weed control plan for after planting.

Have some method of watering available to get the seedlings over any dry periods: watering may be necessary, so plan for it."

Field shelterbelts should be tall and long-lived. The area of field protected is in direct relation to the height of the shelterbelt, so whenever possible, plant tall trees. Species such as green ash and Scots pine are tall and provide a significant area of shelter. Planting density depends on the site and the species chosen.

Shelterbelts also trap snow in the winter. The species planted and the density of the tree stand affect the size of the trapped snowdrift. Denser shelterbelts trap snow in a shorter, deeper drift.

"Green ash is a less dense species, so snow distribution behind a green ash shelterbelt spreads more evenly across the field," says George. "Shrubs, such as caragana, chokecherry and Villosa lilac, provide superior snow trapping and wind protection. They aren't as tall as ash or pine, but they have very dense growth. These species can be used in areas where snow is not a concern, or where maximum protection is required."

A mix of ash and shrub results in a shelterbelt with the density of a shrub row and the height of a tree row. Although several rows per quarter section are recommended, any trees in a field are a benefit.

"Once you know what species you want to plant and where you want to plant them, decide on the number of shelterbelt rows required to protect the field," adds George. "On highly erodible soils, it's recommended to plant up to five rows of trees at right angles to the prevailing winds. The denser the shelterbelt, the greater the wind protection."

Like gardens, shelterbelts suffer when weeds are allowed to grow unchecked. There are a variety of different weed control strategies, including herbicides, plastic mulch, flax shives mulch and others. Contact the local PFRA for further information on shelterbelts, ordering tree seedlings and weed control recommendations.

Contact: Don George
(780) 632-2919

Explore Direct: Marketing rural Alberta products direct to consumers

What does farm direct marketing mean? For an agricultural producer or processor, it may be their livelihood - a market garden, strawberry U-pick or agritourism and pumpkin festival business. It can also be another marketing alternative to help diversify an operation and increase profitability.

"If you're thinking of diversifying your marketing strategy, **Explore Direct** conference will help you assess your options for marketing rural Alberta products direct to consumers," says Karen Goad, agri-food development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie. "This direct marketing industry conference, sponsored by Alberta Agriculture specialists and the Alberta Farmers' Market Association, takes place February 26 and 27, 2001 at the Nisku Inn in Nisku, Alberta."

A variety of select-a-sessions will provide information to meet participants' needs as farm direct marketers. *The Bus Stops Here* presents what marketers need to know about offering farm tours. Safety is a first priority when hosting visitors at a farm business for a U-pick experience, farm tour or any public event. The conference offers an inside look at common liability concepts, the need to minimize liability exposure and insurance and how to use liability insurance as a tool in *Risk Management* on the farm.

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"Every farm selling direct to the consumer has unique staff and labour demands," adds Goad. "The session *Managing Your Labour Force* will examine recruiting, motivating and managing employees, as well as working with a teenage work force."

Farmers' markets are the oldest form of direct marketing. Experienced managers of two of the most successful Alberta Farmers' Markets, St. Albert and Millarville, will share their market management experiences in creating destination farmers' markets. In *Mastering the Market* presentation, market promotions, developing tourism potential and working with sponsors will be covered.

Dr. James Batt, host of the pre-conference workshop, *Marketing for the Merciless*, will continue his light-hearted style in a hard-hitting communications presentation, *Know What You Want Because You're Going to Get it!* Batt teaches the importance of getting a message across and how what you say is as important as the message itself.

Branding and Bagging: It's not just about cattle is an opportunity to work with a graphic artist on building your brand and developing an image for your business and products.

Great customer service, target marketing and a focused theme all are all part of *Creating the Image at the Willow Country Store*. Kim Stubbs and family have incorporated these strategies and more into a thriving weekend business 40 km from a major centre!

E-commerce, The World is Your Marketplace, features Walter De Silva and Willem Kuyt opening the door to electronic marketing and communication for farm direct marketers. They will draw on their internet marketing experiences in the livestock and horticulture industries in this practical session.

Two pre-conference workshops set the stage for the conference, while a Rural Fare Reception provides an opportunity to try a variety of direct marketed rural food products as you network with friends, speakers and colleagues.

Explore Direct brings together farm direct marketing specialists from across the continent to help Albertans strengthen their marketing skills, explore winning alternatives and expand networks.

For more information on the conference, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 422-1789. For toll free access, dial 310-0000 and follow the prompts. Registration brochures are available at Alberta Agriculture district offices.

Contact: Karen Goad
(780) 538-5285
karen.goad@gov.ab.ca

Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4465
kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca

Linda Hawk
(403) 529-3616
linda.hawk@gov.ab.ca

Towards a market focus: From product to market focus

It was hardly a generation ago that farms needed to be diversified to survive. Most farms raised grain and livestock, with some chickens, a sizable garden and likely even a few milk cows to bring in the cream cheque.

"Through the 1970s and 80s, farms became more profitable through specialization and expansion," says Doug Walkey, market specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "The 1990s saw improvements through advanced technology, GMOs and electronics. A common thread through all of those decades was efficient, low cost production. This is clearly a product focus, with producers saying, *'I will be the best at what I want to produce'*. Yet no matter which industry, price competition in a commodity spells narrow profit margins."

The new focus on marketing assumes you are already a competitive producer. But, by differentiating a product, you can have the additional benefits of new sales opportunities and potentially higher prices.

The new market focus begins with *what does my customer want* rather than *what can I produce*. Very often poor production decisions are dictated by an established crop rotation, a past machinery investment, or even a personal preference. In the new business world, customers are gaining economic power and are willing to pay only for the specific products they want.

These products, even in grain farming, are becoming more specific. No longer are oats in demand, the market is looking for a specific quality of known weight, color, plumpness and moisture. These specifications are expanding. It may mean the product is organically grown or from a specific seed stock. The specifications may include a certain type of packaging, special processing, or delivery to a formal location. Even time of delivery, method of payment or credit terms could be part of the differentiation of the product.

"There are lots of factors to consider, and this article is intended only as an introduction," adds Walkey. "The key point is that bulk commodity production must compete on a least-cost basis at narrow profit margin. To command higher prices, greater profit margins, or preferred sales, you need to differentiate the product. And to differentiate that product, you need to know exactly what the client wants to buy."

If you'd like more information, contact Walkey at (403) 782-3301 or <**doug.walkey@gov.ab.ca**>.

This is the second article in a ten-part series *Towards a Market Focus*. One article will be featured each week in *Agri-News* and will be posted on the Alberta Agriculture website <**www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify**> as they are released.

Contact: Doug Walkey
(403) 782-3301

Laura-Lee Billings
(403) 443-8525

AnSci 474 proves successful

Teaching third and fourth year university students can have immediate rewards, but it is the long-term impact to the industry that will provide the measurable results.

The four-month, University of Alberta course, Animal Science 474 - Applied Beef Production was lead by Trevor Yurchak, beef specialist, Athabasca; Christoph Weder, beef specialist, Vermilion; and, Brad Fournier, beef program coordinator, Edmonton. The opportunity to teach the course came with the retirement of Dr. Gary Mathisson. The three Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development specialists started in July, 2000 and developed a fresh approach to the university course.

Objectives were set for the course, showing how the future is most important. During the course, students would:

- understand and function within the beef industry in a business and management focus, rather than in a production focus;
- begin to establish a working network within the beef industry of Alberta and North America;
- have the ability to analyze the costs of production within the beef industry, specifically with respect to the cow calf industry; and,
- finally begin to establish a working network within the beef industry of Alberta and North America.

"The course ran from September to December, at the University of Alberta in Edmonton," says Yurchak. "The classes focused on today's industry, where it is and where it's going. The three coordinators, as well as guest lecturers, addressed timely and important management topics within the beef industry, all geared to challenge the students into developing tools for the future."

"The labs involved tours of industry, including cow/calf operations, feedlots, meat wholesalers and retailers, catering operations, and restaurants," says Fournier. "The goal of the labs was for students to understand that the beef industry is multi-level, and that every level needs to understand the management of the other levels for the industry to prosper. Costs management was emphasized at every level of the beef industry."

Term papers, worth 25 per cent of the students marks, addressed today's issues in the industry. Topics included international trade, environmental issues, land use, consumer concerns and industry policy. These term papers are posted on Alberta Agriculture's website <**www.agric.gov.ab.ca**>, and are available for everyone to view and use.

The term project, worth 50 per cent of the students mark, was a costs collection and analysis of a cow/calf producer in central Alberta. Each student was paired with a producer and an Alberta Agriculture specialist. They worked together to collect and analyze the costs of production for 32 producers. It was beneficial for the students working on the project and helped the producers prepare their management for the next downturn of the beef cycle.

"The team concept was key for this course," adds Weder. "Many Alberta Agriculture members teamed with industry, cow/calf and feedlot operators, beef industry personnel, and the Western Forage/Beef Group to deliver to the beef industry a dynamic and enjoyable form of education."

"The net result of this project is that we made a measurable difference with respect to the future expansion and management of the beef industry," says Yurchak. "The team also had fun, mainly due to the level of energy and the desire to learn that the students had."

Contact: Trevor Yurchak
(780) 675-2252
Christoph Weder
(780) 853-8104
Brad Fournier
(780) 427-4544

FIAP extended to cover crops

A new $5 million provision in the Farm Income Assistance Program (FIAP) will allow Alberta's covered crop industry, including greenhouse growers and mushroom producers, to qualify for a $0.40 per square foot payment.

Under FIAP, a total of $10.29 per acre was made available to farmers of arable land as well as $3 per acre for pasture land and $3 per operational beehive to offset the affects of high input costs and low commodity prices. This represented assistance of approximately five per cent of estimated total annual production costs. The $0.40 per square foot payment represents similar assistance for greenhouse growers.

"When we made the top up payment under FIAP to farmers in October, the covered crop industry was just beginning to feel the effects of increased production costs," says Ty Lund, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Now we find this industry is at a critical point."

Application forms will be mailed to covered crop operations shortly. After the applications have been mailed back, cheques will be issued within six weeks.

As well, minor modifications have been made to the Alberta Farm Income Disaster Loan (AFID) program to allow covered crop industries currently affected by significantly increased production costs to apply for a loan now.

Secured loans with favourable interest rates are available up to a maximum of $100,000. This is a similar response to the loan programs offered to the hog industry in 1998 and the grain industry affected by drought and low commodity prices in 1999 and 2000.

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Provisions are also available under the Farm Income Disaster Program (FIDP) to allow for cash advances on projected FIDP payments which may be applied to the principal of the loan.

Growers interested in the AFID or FIDP cash advance programs should visit their local Agriculture Financial Services Corporation office for more information.

"Without this kind of assistance, there was some danger that a large part of the industry might have to shut down," adds Lund. "With these options available, the industry will be better able to address their immediate cash flow problems. These programs combined with the recent energy rebate programs will help ensure Albertans still have access to the quality products these growers supply."

Contact: Michael Lohner
(780) 427-2137

Agri-News Briefs

Medicinals workshop

On Track with Medicinals, a medicinal herb production and marketing two-day workshop is being offered for the second time on February 20 and 21, 2001, in Fairview. It is an opportunity to learn which species are in demand as short-term fads and long-term trends. At the workshop, attendees will learn about agronomic principles of medicinal production, identifying niche market opportunities; assess challenges; access industry resources and meet key contacts and growers in the medicinal herb industry. For further information, contact Elaine Stenbraaten at (780) 836-3351 or Paul Laflamme at (780) 538-5285.

2001 agronomy workshop

The Canadian Fertilizer Institute (CFI) is offering the 5th Biennial Western Canadian Agronomy Workshop on July 4 to 6, 2001 at the Lethbridge Lodge. The program addresses the topics of crop production, soil fertility, soil and water management and integrated pest management. The planned field tour will also focus on the extensive diversity in agricultural production found in southern Alberta and the management of manure in an intensive livestock production area. Features include invited papers from researchers and agronomists looking for solutions to production problems; published proceedings; and, evening bear pit sessions. Registration is $135 per person. Registration materials will be in early spring. For further information, contact David Finlayson, with CFI in Ottawa, (613) 230-2597, e-mail <**dfinlayson@cfi.ca**> or Adrian Johnston, Potash and Phosphate Institute of Canada, Saskatchewan, (306) 652-3535, e-mail <**ajohnston@ppi-ppic.org**>.

Alberta funds new chair at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine

The Government of Alberta is contributing $1.5 million towards a new Academic Chair in Beef Cattle Health Management at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM), University of Saskatchewan U of S. The contribution will help the College, already a leader in beef cattle health management research, expand research, attract students to specializations in agricultural veterinary practice and provide greater support to the needs of the beef cattle industry in western Canada. The chair will serve as a liaison between the College, the beef cattle industry and government agencies involved in beef production. The WCVM serves the four western provinces, and is one of only four veterinary colleges in Canada. Currently, 280 undergraduate students attend the College, including 80 from Alberta. In addition to the new funding for the chair, the Government of Alberta pays a portion of the College's annual costs of instruction to the U of S. This funding amounted to $1.9 million in 2000/01 and is based on the WCVM inter-provincial agreement. More information is available on the internet at <**www.learning.gov.ab.ca/news**>. For further information, contact Randy Kilburn, Alberta Learning, (780) 427-2285; Dr. Alex Livingston, Dean, WCVM, (306) 966-6607; or Reuben Mapletoft, department head, Large Animal Clinical Sciences, WCVM, (306) 966-7149.

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Bedding plant production workshop

A production workshop designed for beginners and advanced growers of bedding plants and potted material is being held on February 15, 2001 at the Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. The information being presented will be practical and easy to understand. Handouts and publications will be available. Topics under discussion at the workshop include: seeds and seed germination; understanding fertilizers to produce good quality bedding plants; basic cultural practices (temperature, humidity, watering, hardening); pest management through chemical means; and, integrated pest management. The workshop is sponsored by the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA). Workshop fee is $40 for AGGA members and $50 for non-members (includes GST and lunch).

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Agri-News

February 19, 2001

Ventilating the calving barn

Calving season is just beginning, but it's never to early or too late to make sure that there is adequate ventilation in the calving barn.

"We don't know what kind of a spring we'll have this year, wet or dry, warm or cool, but it's known that when several cows and calves are housed inside a calving barn, it can get really damp if the ventilation isn't sufficient," says Robert Borg, unit leader of livestock engineering with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "Poor ventilation leads to wet barns and frost build-up on the ceiling. The solution is bringing extra fresh air into the barn to help dry it out."

One way of ventilating a calving barn uses an uncomplicated design with simple controls and adjustments. The design features a plywood duct that distributes a blend of fresh and recirculated barn air. Inlet and exhaust fans are controlled by manually operated fan speed controllers. If more animals are in the barn, it's a simple process to turn up the fan speed to draw in more cold air. If it's very cold outside, the door upstream of the air inlet fan can be adjusted so that less cold air comes into the barn.

"One of the features of this design is that it still works and brings in fresh air when large doors are open," says Borg. "The plywood duct distributes air effectively in the barn without creating drafts on the animals."

There are two parts of this system to adjust. First adjust the air inlet door that blends fresh and barn air. There will be some trial and error depending on the barn, time of year and cattle numbers. Then adjust the speed of the two fans by hand, this also depends on the number of animals and the amount of fresh air desired.

"Fresh air and dry, comfortable conditions are important in any livestock holding facility. This is especially so in a calving barn where the producers efforts for the whole year are being kept," adds Borg.

1. **Air inlet section** – fresh air enters the barn from outside. Provide a screened hood to protect the fan from wind. A manually adjusted door (made of styrofoam) can be used to blend outside and barn air. The fan draws this mixture of air and blows it down the plywood duct. Typically a 16" fan may be used, the size depends on the barn size.
2. **Air distribution duct section** – will be 16" x 24" cross section area if using a 16" fan. If the duct is 36 feet long, drill a 3-inch hole every 12" or a 2.5-inch hole every 8". The far end of the duct is closed.

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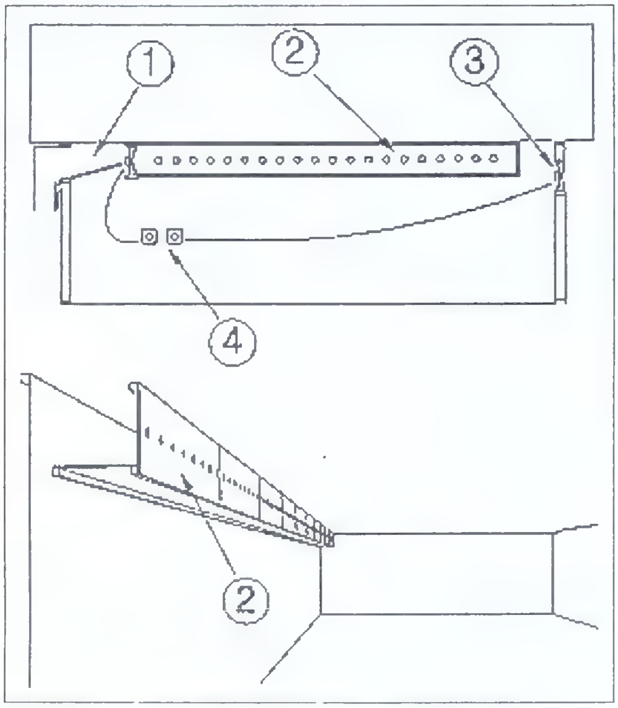

3. **Exhaust fan** – the air exhaust fan is the same size as the air inlet fan, typically 16" diameter.
4. **Fan controls** – each fan has a separate controller. Use a manual speed controller that features a dial that varies the fan speed between minimum and maximum speed. There is no need for a control that has temperature settings. The moisture levels are controlled depending on the number of animals in the barn, not on the temperature.

Contact: *Robert Borg*
(403) 340-5323

Making cereal crops into silage

Many beef producers are moving from grass-legume crops into making silage out of cereal crops.

"Basically, the do's and don'ts of making quality silage are the same for both crops," says Bill Grabowsky, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "In order to produce a good product, you need to chop the wet product at the right moisture level, haul it to a storage facility, pack it to remove the trapped air and then cover the product with a protective barrier. Nature should take over from there and in three weeks, the resulting product should be of high quality."

While this sounds simple, there are some rules to follow. Producers need to chop at the right time and at the right moisture level. Cereal crops, like barley, should be cut at soft dough stage and at a moisture level of 65 per cent. At higher moisture levels, valuable nutrients can leach out through seepage. Cereal crops should be cut at approximately 3/8 of an inch for best results. Too long of a cut can cause packing difficulties as trapped air can't escape. Excessive heat and mould growth can then occur.

"Fill the storage facility as quickly as possible," adds Grabowsky. "Packing every load is very important as air must be excluded from the chopped crop. The more time it takes to fill, the more time the crop is exposed to the air. The goal in making quality silage is to eliminate the air from the silage storage structure.

"Keeping exposure to air at a minimum can be accomplished by covering the ensiled crop with a protective barrier. It has been estimated that the cost of spoiled silage on the surface of a 40 by 80 foot silo is six times, or more, greater than the cost of a plastic cover."

Beef producers who want to produce quality silage for their feeding program should pay close attention to details: crop staging, moisture content, chop length, packing and covering techniques.

Contact: *Bill Grabowsky*
(780) 361-1240

Crop insurance reflects value of processing potatoes

Farmers growing larger potatoes for processing can now insure their crop for its higher production value. Alberta's crop insurance program has been changed to recognize different uses and types of processing potatoes.

"Larger, late-season potatoes – primarily the Russet Burbank variety – are now grown on more southern Alberta acres than any other variety," says Lund. "We're responding to this market shift by making insurance coverage available for newer varieties."

The change was made in response to requests from individual farmers and the Potato Growers of Alberta. Many potato growers have changed the varieties they seed in order to supply processing companies looking for a greater supply of potatoes for french fries.

"The Alberta potato industry is getting larger and we want to support that growth," adds Lund. "By enabling farmers to select more specific varietal coverage, they can better manage their risk and ultimately stay competitive."

Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) provides potato coverage under crop insurance in three categories: table, processing and seed. This change enhances the processing category by dividing it into three categories: fryers (Russet Burbank), fryers (other) and chippers. The changes are in effect for the 2001 crop year and growers have until April 30, 2001 to elect or change insurance coverage.

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For more information farmers should contact their local district office of AFSC or call 1-800-396-0215 for the office nearest them.

AFSC is a provincial Crown Corporation providing farmers and agri-businesses with financial services including crop insurance, farm income disaster protection and farm and agri-business loans.

Contact: *Michael Lohner* *(780) 427-2137*
Tom Crozier *(403) 782-8251*

Towards a market focus: What's your competitive advantage?

Customers need a reason to deal with a company or business. No matter how pleasant the smile and how trendy the offerings, first-time clients make personal decisions to become repeat customers. There must be at least one feature of an agricultural product or service that meets a specific need.

"A competitive advantage, in broad terms, is the special package of services, accessibility and products that sets an enterprise apart from others," says Doug Walkey, market specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Traditionally the big two advantages have been price and store location."

Price in this context is really value for the money. A premium product, say a specialty hybrid rose, could be considered cheap at twice the price of a more common flower. The old saying about the three most important features of retail real estate, location, location, and location, relates directly to getting products in front of willing customers.

"In the past decade there has been a solid shift toward service as a competitive edge," adds Walkey. "A busier, more affluent society has proven willing to pay for convenience and a pleasant shopping experience. Specialty stores and boutiques offer premium selections, personalized service and high levels of product expertise to the discerning customer."

Now it's the era of e-commerce. Customers can shop around the world on the internet. Digital *bots* do the legwork, making hunting for the lowest offered price easy, literally a mouse-click does it. Customers become more mobile and potentially more fickle buyers.

So how do you compete? It may be by offering an excellent selection of a narrow range of products. Offer special expertise to make the purchase and use of the product more pleasant or effective. It may even benefit to package goods and services to make the value of the purchase worth more than each of the components would be separately.

"Considering the products or services produced, decide whether it is possible to compete strictly on a lowest cost basis," says Walkey. "Many small businesses can't. So what can be offered to make a higher price acceptable? The answer here is related to the product or service being offered."

Many agricultural products are considered commodities. That is, the product from one farm is not readily distinguished from that of other farms. It is very difficult to command a premium price, so competition must be at a lowest price level.

Being able to separate a product from the masses can be highly profitable. An example of successful product differentiation would be specially cleaned and bagged oats delivered to an equestrian facility for feeding horses. The added value isn't oats, it is packaging, handling, delivery and timing to suit the customer.

"Having an identifiable brand is also an advantage," says Walkey. "If customers can spot the product by its label and if the product has earned their loyalty, a repeat purchase can be the reward. Services can be identifiable as well. The ease in arranging the service, the location the service is offered, and the timing of delivery are important advantages."

Once the kind of advantages being offered are decided upon, the next step is to make the client aware of them. Promotion, information, and advertising are important to help the client understand why dealing with a particular company or purchasing a particular product is a benefit. A hidden advantage is no advantage at all.

"Competitive advantage is an asset," continues Walkey. "Consider it part of the stock-in-trade. It takes effort to maintain a competitive advantage, particularly those easily copied by competitors. For example, a small jam manufacturer offers a wide-mouthed container for easy access. This may be a great selling point initially but is easily matched by a competitor.

"Understanding business strengths is important for the health of a business. Make a special point of knowing what the client considers an advantage of the products, and then capitalize on that knowledge."

This is the third article in a ten-part series *Towards a Market Focus*. One article will be featured each week in *Agri-News* and will be posted on the Alberta Agriculture website <**www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify**> as they are released.

Contact: *Doug Walkey*
(403) 782-3301

Alberta proposes national farm input costs program

Alberta has proposed a national program to address rising input costs, including farm fertilizer, chemicals and fuel. Proposals were tabled at a one-day meeting on February 9, 2001 in Regina. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Minister, Ty Lund was one of the agriculture ministers who called for the emergency meeting to address the issue of high input costs in agriculture.

"I am anxious to deal with these issues, in particular the issue of fertilizer, chemical and fuel costs," says Lund. "The purpose of the meeting was for agriculture ministers to sit down as colleagues and take a good hard look at the agriculture input cost crisis and try to create a unified approach to address it.

"Alberta has taken action to help farmers in our province deal with high input costs and the income squeeze many are feeling. But the fact is, the cost of farm fertilizer and chemicals and the cost of fuel are growing problems across the country. A national solution to these pressing issues is needed for provincial agriculture ministers to take to the federal government for their action."

Since 1999, input costs have increased by approximately 12 per cent for dryland crops. In 1999, nitrogen fertilizer costs were $13.75 per acre for dryland crops. They are expected to be $22.80 per acre for this year, an increase of 65 per cent.

Alberta estimates that federal excise tax is in excess of $57 million for gas and diesel fuel used by Alberta farmers. There is no provincial tax on farm fuel. Lund is calling on the federal government to rebate the federal excise tax and to remove the up-front cost to farmers for the Goods and Services Tax on fuel.

A federal/provincial/territorial agriculture ministers meeting is planned for early March. Lund says he hopes the federal government will be able to respond to any proposals by that time.

Contact: Ray Bassett
Assistant Deputy Minister, Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-1957

Michael Lohner
Executive Assistant to the
Alberta Agriculture Minister
(780) 427-2127

Organic producers workshop

The Sustainable Agriculture Association (SAA) is organizing an ***Organic Producers Workshop*** on March 9, 2001 at the Alberta Agriculture Building in Airdrie.

"The SAA is a non-profit, charitable society operating in Alberta to promote the use of regenerative farming techniques for food production," says Mike Dolinski, organic specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Members, both consumer and grower, are committed to the production of naturally nutritious food grown without the use of biocides or chemically processed fertilizers."

As part of the commitment to promoting this philosophy of food production, SAA is inviting interested farmers or members of the public to participate in the workshop.

Workshop sessions include: an Inspector's Perspective, Llizabet K. Dwwyor M.Sc., P.Ag. – I.O.I.A. Accredited Organic Inspector for Crops, Livestock and Processing, and Crop Rotations & Soil Biology, Jill Clapperton, Ph D. – Agriculture Canada. The workshop also features a producer's panel, where attendees can ask the experts. Panel members, and their areas of expertise, include Tony Marshall, processing and chair; Gert Lund, vegetables; Rose Giberson, poultry; Cecil Hoven, livestock; Neall Coulson, grains and oil seeds; and Frank Sarro, buyer with CNF.

This workshop promises to provide valuable information for all organic producers, new and transitional.

Registration is $35 for first registration and $15 person for additional. The evening begins at 5:00 p.m. with a light supper (soup & bun). Please bring a bowl and spoon for your supper.

For more information and to pre-register please, contact Paulo da Costa (403) 283-9577, 1-888-561-2555 outside Calgary, e-mail <sustainable_agriculture_association@hotmail.com>.

Contact: Mike Dolinski (780) 422-4873
Paulo da Costa (403) 283-9577

10th Annual Emerald Awards

The Emerald Foundation is seeking Alberta individuals, organizations and community groups who have demonstrated excellence in activities to protect, preserve, enhance and sustain the environment. Nomination forms for the 2001 Emerald Awards to recognize these individuals are now available from the Alberta Foundation for Environmental Excellence.

"Nominations can be made in categories including small or large business, corporate or institutional leadership, research and innovation, individual commitment, not-for-profit association or community group, education, government institution, and communications, media and the arts," says Carol Bettac, Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture program manager with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

In order to be considered for an Emerald Award, the individual or project must meet the criteria, which include demonstration of a commitment to preservation, protection, enhancement or sustainability of the environment positive, tangible and long-term impact on: quality of air, water or land; preservation of biological diversity; climate change/ greenhouse gases; and, public or corporate attitudes toward the environment.

Where appropriate, judging will acknowledge efforts that reflect collaborative, team- or partnership-based approaches that have contributed to the success of the nomination.

Nominations close on Wednesday, 28 February; judging will occur during April and the 10th Annual Emerald Awards celebration will take place on 18 June 2001 in Calgary.

For more information about the Emerald Awards, or to request a nomination form, contact Becky Vander Steen at (780) 413-9629 or 1-800-219-8329, or email **<bvs@trevose.com>**. More information is also available from the Emerald Awards website at **<http://www.emeraldawards.com>**.

Contact: *Carol Bettac*
(780) 427-3885

Agri-News Briefs

Rhea, Emu and Ostrich

Ag-Ventures, agriculture business profiles for the three ratites were revised by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in January 2001. The factsheets, Commercial Rhea Industry (Agdex # FS 484-830-3), Commercial Emu Industry (Agdex # FS 484/830-2) and Commercial Ostrich Industry (Agdex # FS 484/830-1), cover industry highlights, market basics, production basics, economic and financial basics, and key management issues. Rhea, emu and ostrich are red meat, similar to beef in taste but lower in fat and cholesterol. Other products derived from ratites include unique, strong and supple leather, feathers for fashion and costuming industries and fine oil used in cosmetic products. Copies of Ag-Venture factsheets are available at all Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development offices and at the publications office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 5T6.

Explore Direct

On February 26 and 27, 2001 at the Nisku Inn, Nisku, at the ***Explore Direct*** conference, agrifood specialists and rural development specialists will present information on marketing rural Alberta products directly to consumers. Presentations by speakers from across Canada will share experiences, success stories and information about what makes farm direct marketing feasible and fun. Farm direct marketing occurs when producers sell their products or services directly to the consumer. This type of marketing is increasing in popularity for several reasons: a renewed interest in visiting the farm where the food was grown and the chance to deal directly with the grower; prices and freshness of the product; and the ability for consumers to have some direct participation in the social heritage of the family farm. For further information about this unique conference, contact Betty Vladicka, horticulture development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, (780) 422-1789. Government numbers are toll free by dialing 310-0000.

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Branding the Peace Conference

Branding the Peace Conference: Marketing Peace Agriculture for Higher Profits, where participants will learn about and participate in a strategy to market Peace Country products, is being held at the George Dawson Inn in Dawson Creek, B.C., on March 1 to 3, 2001. Areas of Peace Country uniqueness that sell will be identified and brand and quality standards will be developed. Speakers on Friday and work sessions on Saturday, make the conference a learning opportunity focused on how to use 'branding' as a marketing tool, how to work together, and build a knowledge base on marketable unique features of our region and products. Registration fee is $20 per person and $30 per couple. The fee includes the kick-off wine and cheese, and breakfasts and a lunch. For further information, contact Mac Taylor at (250) 782-5745, fax (250) 782-5448, e-mail <**entprise@pris.bc.ca**> or Susan Meyer, rural development specialist – organizations with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie, (780) 538-5630.

Alternative livestock marketing workshop

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Elk Centre of Excellence and Bison Centre of Excellence, along with the Mighty Peace Wild Boar Association and the Northern Lights White Tail and Mule Deer Association are organizing a marketing workshop for alternative livestock on March 7, 2001 at the Dunvegan Motor Inn, Fairview. Key market and production development information pertaining to gaining market control and entering into value-added processing and production is the focus of this workshop. As space is limited, registration before February 28 is advised. For further information, contact Tim Keating, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, (780) 837-2211.

Toogood inducted into the Conservation Hall of Fame

Each year, the Soil Conservation Council of Canada recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to soil and water conservation by nominating them to the Conservation Hall of Fame. The latest inductee is Dr. John Toogood, professor of soil science with the University of Alberta from 1958 to 1978. Through his extension work, Toogood bridged the gap between scientific discovery and practical application and spent countless hours with producers and those involved in the agriculture industry. During his career, he was recognized for his dedication to eliminating soil erosion, for enhancing cropping practices and for contributing to the science relating to land use and land management. Being inducted into the Conservation Hall of Fame is one of the highest honours an individual can receive. It recognizes the individual's dedication and commitment to maintaining a healthy environment. Sadly, Dr. Toogood passed away in 1998 at the age of 83. His wisdom is missed. His many contributions to soil and water conservation continue to be of value to all. The Hall of Fame is located in the Sir John Carling Building in Ottawa.

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Agri-News

February 26, 2001

Agriculture 2001 – moving forward and making it happen

"If I could capture the year 2000 in a few words I would describe it as a year of conversation with the agriculture industry," says Jim Nichols, Deputy Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

Last year, Alberta Agriculture spent a lot of time talking with producers, processors and others to get a better understanding of what needs to be done to launch Alberta's agriculture industry into the future.

"Ag Summit 2000 was the pinnacle of that discussion," adds Nichols. "Ag Summit was a collaborative effort where Albertans were consulted about the future of the industry. It resulted in the creation of 14 Action Teams to tackle 17 recommended initiatives. To keep up the momentum, Agrivantage, an industry-government coordinating team, has been established to work with and support those Action Teams."

Ag Summit gave a good snapshot of the current state of agriculture in the province and globally. It defined the challenges and opportunities Alberta faces as a global competitor and helped government and industry develop a rough framework for change that will position Alberta for growth.

"I invite all Albertans to visit the Alberta Agriculture website at <**www.agsummit.gov.ab.ca**> to find out all of the latest developments," says Nichols.

During 2000, other consultations also took place. Committees travelled the province talking with Albertans about intensive livestock operations and crop insurance. All of these discussions are helping Alberta move forward with what needs to be done to meet the needs of industry. Balancing growth with tradition and making sure that all farmers are equipped with the best risk management tools possible, is a big part of positioning Alberta and Alberta producers and processors with a competitive advantage.

"The agriculture and food industry in Alberta is continually evolving and is always faced with new challenges and opportunities," says Nichols. "As a department, Alberta Agriculture continues to evolve, changing to be even more responsive, flexible and better able to focus on the growth of

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT

the agriculture and food industry in Alberta. The department will continue to offer a great staff of specialists to work with industry in order to make good things happen."

As an industry, agriculture must continue to promote its importance: it is essential to the lives of everyone in this province. It continues to be the province's largest renewable resource and is a vital source of economic sustainability and well being. As agriculture grows and diversifies, it also contributes to the diversification of the provincial economy.

"We have set a goal of increasing primary production to $10 billion and value-added activity to $20 billion by the year 2010," continues Nichols. "It is a goal that can be achieved with the hard work and entrepreneurial skills of Alberta producers."

Alberta Agriculture is working with the agriculture and food industry toward this goal, providing the expertise of specialists, offering the best risk management tools and helping the industry grow while remaining competitive.

"We look forward to another remarkable year working with all Albertans," concludes Nichols.

Contact: Jim Nichols
(780) 427-2145

Organic customers are mainstream

A recent ***Environics Food Monitor*** survey indicates that 40 per cent of the Canadian population shop for organic items often – 18 per cent do so regularly and 22 per cent shopped for organics several times in the past year. Add to that another 31 per cent who have experimented with organic foods once or twice and a trend of increasing awareness and demand for organic foods becomes apparent.

"Both the heavy and light buyers of organic foods are fairly representative of the Canadian population with a few small, yet interesting, differences," says Rosalie Cunningham, research officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The heaviest buyers of organic products are more likely to be female, 60 per cent. The national average of organic shoppers is 18 per cent, however, 22 per cent of the population in British Columbia are organic shoppers."

Other statistics gleaned from the survey indicate that:

- both heavy and light buyers are under-represented in the $60,000 to $80, 000 income range
- both purchase patterns have a slight shift toward younger age groups (18 to 34 years)
- both heavy and light buyers have a tendency to have a higher education

"Organics is cutting across all demographics and entering the mainstream population," adds Cunningham. "Overall, the organic consumer tends to mirror the general population, even in terms of marital status and family structure, for example, one third have children. An important fact since having children has been identified as one of the three main triggers for purchasing organic foods. The other two main reasons sited for choosing organic foods are specific food allergies and healthy lifestyle.

"The average Canadian thinks that organic foods have a place in the mainstream. Pesticides, pollution and food safety are all top food concerns. Sixty-four per cent of Canadians believe that organic foods are safer and healthier and 68 per cent are willing to pay the 10 per cent premium. Taste, however, still ranks as the most important factor in food choices, nutrition and health come in second. This fact may bode well for the organic industry as many organic consumers rave about the taste."

Some emerging core values in Canadian culture as a whole also make the organic food very appealing, these being an increased interest in personal wellness, environmental health and a return to the basics. Organic choices attract even the experimental element in the consumers, giving them a chance to try new flavors and foods. More innovative retailers have also catered to the experience-seeking consumers by connecting them to the farmer via in-store presentations by the producer.

"Organic foods appeal to many of the key traits, concerns and values of the Canadian population. Those who purchase organics range from a health conscious teenager, a concerned mother to an aging baby-boomer," says Cunningham. "More importantly, the trend is not going away."

Growing Global, a conference on medicinal herbs and organic foods, is being held on March 5 to 7, 2001 at the Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre in Edmonton. Conference registration is $250 per person, student registration is $50 per student. Single day registration is also available for $150 per person. For more information, contact Heather Shewchuk at (780) 422-7196.

Contact: Rosalie Cunningham (780) 415-9013
Mike Dolinski (780) 422-4873

Greenhouse crops carbon dioxide research boosts yields by 40 per cent

Research by the Greenhouse Crops Program at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), in Brooks, has developed a cost effect method of carbon dioxide supplementation that increases yield potentials by up to 40 per cent. The three-year research project was a cooperative effort between the

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Greenhouse Crops Program, Air Liquide Canada and the growers of the Red Hat Cooperative.

"Carbon is an important nutrient for crop plants, and plants get their carbon from carbon dioxide," says Jim Calpas, greenhouse crops research specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Brooks. "During the summer months, carbon dioxide becomes the limiting factor to production in greenhouses. The plants are using carbon dioxide so rapidly that carbon dioxide levels within the greenhouse during a sunny Alberta day can be 15 per cent less than the levels in the air outside the greenhouse. The plants are then essentially starving for carbon dioxide."

The benefits of carbon dioxide supplementation in greenhouse crop production was known as early as 1888 in Germany. Developing methods of carbon dioxide supplementation that are cost-effect has been the factor that has kept research scientists busy.

"The other main greenhouse growing areas in Canada have been using carbon dioxide successfully for a number of years, however, the systems that are used in these areas do not translate directly to the Alberta situation," adds Calpas. 'Alberta has a distinct hot, dry climate and a carbon dioxide supplementation system that was efficient under high ventilation rates was required."

The research at Brooks developed a method to introduce carbon dioxide to sweet pepper and tomato plants using tubes located inside the canopy of the crop. This precision placement system, a variation of the systems used in other greenhouse growing areas, ensures that the carbon dioxide is introduced close to the leaves of the plants. It is the leaves that remove the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

"The yield response from the crops was astounding; a 40 per cent increase in tomato production and a 30 per cent increase in sweet pepper production," says Calpas. 'The development of this system puts Alberta greenhouse growers back in the driver's seat when it comes to yield potential."

Contact: Jim Calpas
(403) 362-1312

Purple loosestrife eradication program enhances wetlands

Purple Loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria* is a beautiful garden ornamental that has escaped and infested Alberta wetlands, threatening their natural balance and bio-diversity. Purple loosestrife can be identified by its noticeable four-sided stem and its tall spike of tightly clustered pink-purple flowers that bloom from mid-July through to September.

"Designated as a noxious weed in 1992, purple loosestrife is a relentless, non-native invader that chokes out native wetland vegetation and reduces available food and shelter for wildlife," says Jamie Motta, purple loosestrife program coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "This weed is very prolific, producing 2.5 million seeds a year per plant. In areas where purple loosestrife populations are on the increase, the biological diversity of wetland habitats declines."

Since 1994, the Alberta Purple Loosestrife Eradication Program, under the leadership of Alberta Agriculture, has been very successful in decreasing purple loosestrife numbers through out the province. The eradication program, with the assistance of several stakeholder groups, has addressed the invasion of purple loosestrife through public awareness, the adoption of the Purple Loosestrife Exchange Program for gardeners and through organized control initiatives such as Purple Plant Pulls.

"Purple loosestrife is treated with the same contempt as the rat," says Shaffeek Ali, acting leader for the Pest Prevention and Management Unit, Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "If a problem area is reported, members of the coalition immediately go on a 'seek and destroy' mission to get rid of the weed. Control efforts employed over the last six years have reduced provincial purple loosestrife plant numbers to almost a quarter, from over 315,00 reported in 1994 to just over 83,000 in 2000."

Public involvement has been a key contributor to the success of the program. Every year, several infestation reports are received from conscientious individuals. Many volunteers have contributed countless man hours to the physical removal of this weed.

"Slowly but surely, the provincial Purple Loosestrife Eradication Program is working," adds Motta. "Native plants are now re-establishing in wetland areas that only a few years ago were engulfed in a deadly sea of purple. Through dedication and quick action, most of Alberta's infestations are small compared with other provinces, rarely involving more than 50 plants.

For more information about the Alberta Purple Loosestrife Eradication Program, visit the program's webpage located on the Alberta Agriculture website at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>. Link to 'pests', 'weeds', 'eradication programs'. Also for further information, or to report a possible infestation sighting, contact the provincial Purple Loosestrife Program coordinator at (780) 422-4909 or (780) 422-7199. Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialling 310-0000.

Contact:	*Jamie Motta*	*Shaffeek Ali*
	(780) 422-7199	*(780) 422-4909*

Development of biological controls for greenhouse disease problems

The Greenhouse Crops Program at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), in Brooks, is big on biological. Biological controls to be exact. Recent research in the program has focused on developing biological controls for greenhouse disease problems, particularly *Botrytis cinerea*, the gray mould pathogen. Gray mould can be a serious problem in a number greenhouse crops, particularly in spring when cool, damp conditions persist in Alberta greenhouses.

"Many consumers have also occasionally had encounters with gray mould as it can occur on strawberries or other similar produce that have been left in the refrigerator too long," says Jim Calpas, greenhouse crops research specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Brooks. "The mould can be recognized as a fuzzy gray coating on the fruit. Although gray mould is, at worst, a minor inconvenience when it shows up in the home, it can be disastrous in the greenhouse."

Research at CDCS is looking at another fungus, *Trichoderma sp.* that can protect greenhouse crops from the gray mould pathogen. *Trichoderma sp.* are found all over the world, but the work at CDCS has concentrated on local Alberta isolates of the fungus. Believing that you don't have to go far from home to find a solution to a problem, the Greenhouse Crops Team has found two promising *Trichoderma sp.* isolates that provide a level of control comparable to some fungicides.

"The next challenge is to find a industry partner willing to evaluate the isolates for commercialization," adds Calpas. "Hopefully, Alberta greenhouse growers will have access to Alberta solutions for some of their disease problems."

Contact: Jim Calpas
(403) 362-1312

Identifying market potential for diversification

Opportunities for Albertans to find new business opportunities that tie in with their current farm or ranch business are all around! The key is to identify those that hold the most potential for economic benefit without placing a business in a risky situation that is counter to current business and personal goals.

"A starting point for this process is to begin thinking and acting like an *agri-preneur*, an entrepreneur with a focus on agricultural related business activities," says Janice McGregor rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Morinville. "Successful agri-preneurs take opportunities to create new ways to solve problems both old and new. They have perseverance, vision and patience. They are achievement oriented and independent. They strongly adhere to the concept of profit, but keep balance between business and personal goals."

Successful agri-preneurs understand the reasons why businesses fail and do everything they can to avoid these pitfalls during the planning and start-up phase as they pursue new business opportunities. Businesses fail because they ignore customers, disregard market conditions, do a poor job of pricing, fail to stick to plans and budgets and lack managerial control.

The logical place to bring about more net income is to insure current operations are as efficient as possible. This can mean evaluating costs of production and eliminating or changing practices that are not profitable before exploring new opportunities.

"Expanding the scale of current production alternatives is often one of the first income growth strategies that producers investigate," adds McGregor. "Adding more acres or animal units might decrease unit costs as overhead is spread over more units of production. In many cases such a strategy also uses excess management capacity."

The next income generating strategy producers usually consider is diversification. This generally involves adding new enterprises to the current production mix. Diversifying operations may result in adding a commercial herd to a cattle operation, or growing new crop varieties in addition to traditional crops. It could also involve adding entirely new enterprises unrelated to those that are presently part of the farm business.

"Adding value-added businesses to current operations can offer a wide variety of income generating opportunities to which traditional agricultural producers do not usually give much thought," says McGregor. "In the simplest terms, a value-added product is any product with a value greater than the sum of its parts, created by processing, packaging, marketing and promotion activities. What can be considered a value-added product is very diverse and one must keep an open and flexible mind-set when identifying value-added product opportunities."

Producers are usually more familiar with the production and marketing of agricultural commodities characterized by large volume production and product homogeneity. This seldom leaves any room for marketing efforts that could lead to premium pricing for a differentiated product. Taking a commodity and transforming it into a product is the traditional view of value-adding; wheat to flour; flour to bread. However, there are many variations on the traditional view of value-adding. Continuing with the example of a loaf of bread,

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the type of bread produced could be targeted at the high-end of the market – a specialty French bread using stone ground flour which sells for a premium price. Additional value is created by positioning the product in a market segment willing to pay sufficiently more to compensate for the increased cost of producing the specialty bread and this can generate a higher overall profit for the processor.

"Identifying and marketing to a niche market can be an alternative strategy that certain producers could use if they have a product rather than a commodity," says McGregor. "A niche market is a special segment of a market often defined in terms of particular buyer characteristics for which a business feels particularly well suited to target. For example, seedstock producers could position their product by communicating the benefits and features to the target market and begin to develop an image that would give them a competitive advantage over their competitors."

Thorough evaluation of alternative income producing strategies will significantly increase a farm business's chances for success. Putting as much effort as possible into gathering information, completing economic analyses, studying markets and customer profiles, as well as completing other planning activities, will pay big dividends. Whatever changes, large or small, that are hoped for and anticipated in a farming business to increase net income, the chances for success will be greatly improved.

Contact: Janice McGregor
(780) 939-4351

Research under glass

Greenhouse Crops Research and Extension Program at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), in Edmonton, is designed to provide services to growers in Northern and Central Alberta, while southern Alberta growers are served from the Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS) in Brooks.

"The greenhouse crops industry has special research and extension needs because of the protected nature of growing crops," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist, CDCN. "It takes special skills to grow crops from seed to harvest and then to maintain high quality of products throughout the season. The research needs of this industry are unique because of the diversity of crops grown and the nature of crops grown."

There are three main greenhouse crops in Alberta, bedding plants, vegetable crops and tree seedlings, and they all have special needs. While bedding plants growers are involved in growing plants and selling them to customers, the vegetable growers are more involved in managing the crops so that they can harvest fruit over an extended period of time. The tree seedling growers have to grow seedlings to certain target specifications in a limited period of time and several different stock types.

"During the past few years, the research program at CDCN has focused on developing information on new growing media, such as coir, the fibre from coco-nuts. This media improves root zone environment so that more nutrients can be absorbed by the plants and thus increasing productivity," adds Mirza.

Also during the past year, a collaborative research project with ARC Vegreville has identified the use of a bacterium to reduce the incidence of root pathogen Pythium in case of seedless cucumbers. Trials at CDCN have shown that egg plants can become an economically alternative crop to growing tomatoes. The plant is grown as a single stem and one fruit is allowed to develop at each internode. In 2001, a part of the CDCN greenhouse is devoted to testing three newer varieties which have more desirable fruit characteristics.

"Three varieties of squash which have vertical growth habit like cucumbers are going to be tested this year," says Mirza. "Up until now, greenhouse growers could not grow squash in greenhouses because all the varieties of squash had a horizontal growth habit and leaves were very close to each other. This resulted in serious fungal disease problems due to high humidity in the crown area. If this trial proves that good quality squash can be produced in greenhouses, it will make another fresh vegetable product available to greenhouse growers and to Albertans."

Research work with medicinal plant is getting exciting as well. Currently, work at CDCN is looking at different medicinal plants for production in greenhouses. *Echinacea angustifolia* and other species can be grown in greenhouses in a shorter period of time of six to nine months, as compared to two to three years in the field. The interest in the production of good quality plugs for field planting has been great.

"In the year 2001, more than a million plugs are likely to be grown for planting in western Canada," says Mirza. "Our research has standardized Echinacea seed germination methods so that it can be used for large scale seeding and planting."

Extension and technology transfer aspects of greenhouse program are equally exciting. Information is provided through site visits when needed, holding workshops on different subjects, growers sponsored field days, regular publication of the ***Greenhouse Coverings*** newsletter, internet and telephone.

"Between the CDCN and CDCS, several hundred calls from existing growers and future growers are handled each season," says Mirza. "The need for new information is constantly growing and researchers have to keep on looking at innovative means to transfer the information. The challenge is to

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generate cost of production information, especially now when production costs are increasing rapidly. To be competitive, growers must know the cost of production for the products they are growing. Greenhouse program constantly receive help from the economics unit of the Economics and Competitiveness Division of Alberta Agriculture to develop the cost of production information."

For more information on greenhouse program at CDCN, contact Mirza at (780) 415-2303.

Contact: Mohyuddin Mirza
(780) 415-2303
<mohyuddin. mirza@gov.ab.ca>

Counselling opportunities for senior 4-H members

Every year, resumes are reviewed by employers looking for that difference. Many young people feel that they are caught in the middle. A company won't hire them because they don't have the experience: they don't have the experience because the company will not hire them. How do young Albertans get the experience they need?

"The Alberta 4-H program provides a very popular program to senior 4-H members that helps youth develop the skills and experience many companies are looking for," says Marguerite Stark, provincial 4-H programs specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "The Leadership through Counselling Seminar (LTCS) trains and places members into volunteer camp counsellor positions across the province. Not only do members *Learn to do by Doing*, but they get feedback from staff, fellow counsellors and the young people they are working with."

The summer 4-H camping program is a great chance for 4-H members to use the skills developed at LTCS in working with others, delegation, leadership, communication and teaching. All graduates of the LTCS are encouraged to counsel throughout the summer or during fall and winter regional programs. At these programs, young Albertans gain skills in personal development, responsibility, program planning, working as a team, goal setting and safety.

"Prospective employers look for experience, they look for involvement and they look for 4-H," adds Stark. "Putting all three of these together and adding all the fun and enjoyment of a 4-H program makes great sense."

Each year, the 4-H program also provides opportunities for adults to volunteer at one of 20 different programs. From livestock and judging competitions, to Club Week and junior camp, the variety and development opportunities are endless. Many facilitators in the 4-H program have commented that: "...the networking potential, the comradery, and the support received is outstanding", "...had the opportunity to use and practice the facilitation skills", "...was able to develop a lesson plan and teach an activity", "...was able to share the knowledge and skills", and "...had even more fun than the participants". Many volunteers come back year after year.

This years LTCS is scheduled for June 28 to July 2, 2001 at the Alberta 4-H Centre. Applications are available in the Cloverleaf Quarterly. The application deadline is May 15, 2001.

LTCS is sponsored by Agricore, Agrium, Peavy Mart and Wetaskiwin Cooperative Association, this program attracts over 90 applications each year.

Adults wishing to volunteer can contact the 4-H office in Airdrie at (403) 948-8509 or e-mail **<marguerite.stark@gov.ab.ca>**.

Contact: Marguerite Stark
(403) 948-8509

Alberta agriculture estimates

Many of the estimates listed were jointly prepared by Statistics Canada and the Statistics and Data Development Unit of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Cattle and calves:

- Alberta continues to lead the country in cattle and calf inventories (5.16 million head), followed by Saskatchewan (2.26 million head) and Ontario (2.03 million head)
- currently, Alberta accounts for more than one-half (55.7 per cent) of the total Western Canadian herd of 9.26 million head and 40.1 per cent of the national total of 12.86 million
- as of January 1, 2001, the estimated total inventory of cattle and calves on farms in the province was 5.16 million head, down 1.2 per cent from the January 1, 2000 figure of 5.22 million
- although it may still be too early to tell, there is some evidence to suggest that some herd rebuilding may have started. Beef cow numbers were up for the first time, since peaking in 1996. As of January 1, 2001, beef cows totalled 1,673,000, up 1.1 per cent, from 1,655,000 a year earlier. Likewise, beef heifers for replacement grew by 5.2 per cent to 242,000 head, from 230,000 in 2000.
- Alberta reported a total of 101,000 milk cows as of January 1, 2001, down 1.0 per cent from the previous year. Increasing milk productivity was among the factors influencing the decline

Pigs:

- across Canada, Alberta ranks fourth in pig inventories, behind Quebec (3.69 million head), Ontario (3.09 million head) and Manitoba (1.92 million head)

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- Alberta currently accounts for approximately 36.2 per cent of the estimated total western Canadian pig population of 4.87 million head and 14.7 per cent of the national total of 12.03 million head
- estimates at January 1, 2001, show the size of the Alberta herd marginally declining by 0.4 per cent, with the total number of pigs on farms at 1.76 million head, compared to 1.77 million a year ago.
- there appears to be some stability in the sow herd, as numbers remained unchanged from the previous quarterly October 1, 2000 estimate. As of January 1, 2000, sows and bred gilts were estimated at 185,000, up 2.2 per cent from a year earlier

Sheep and lambs:

- flock rebuilding continues to occur in Alberta. The January 1, 2001 sheep and lamb estimate puts the provincial total at 167,000 head, up 7.7 per cent over 2000, and marks the third straight year of growth
- roughly two-thirds of the total flock expansion was attributed to an increase in the number of breeding animals. Noteworthy increases included breeding ewes which were estimated at 113,700, up 6.3 per cent from 107,000 in 2000; replacement lambs increased 3.4 per cent to 15,000 head, from 14,500 in 2000.
- Alberta currently accounts for about 43 per cent of the total estimated sheep and lamb population of 389,200 head in Western Canada, and roughly 20 per cent of the Canadian total of 842,200 head. The province ranks third behind Ontario (245,000 head) and Quebec (175,000 head) in sheep and lamb inventories

Beekeeping:

- preliminary estimates show 2000 to be a less than average year for honey production, with 23.2 million pounds of honey produced
- 2000 estimates are that Alberta produced roughly one-third or 33.5 per cent of the national total of 69.4 million pounds of honey
- the total value of Alberta produced honey (excluding wax) in 1999 was $20.2 million (29 per cent of the national total of $70.4 million). Comparable estimates for 2000 are not yet available
- in 2000, the estimated number of beekeepers in Alberta was 725, while nationally the total was 9,913
- Alberta reported managing an estimated 215,000 colonies in 2000, up 4.9 per cent from 1999
- in 2000, approximately 48,000 colonies were used in pollination services for the production of hybrid canola seed. These bees produce very little honey

Estimates of the 2000 crop production of principal field crops

- in 2000, all wheat production (winter wheat, spring wheat and durum wheat) totalled 7.29 million metric tonnes (267,780,000 bushels), down significantly from the 1999 total of 8.14 million metric tonnes
- oats production is estimated at 657,000 metric tonnes for 2000 (42,600,000 bushels)
- production of barley is estimated at almost 5.39 million metric tonnes (247,500,000 bushels) for 2000, down from production totals of 5.99 million metric tonnes in 1999
- in 2000, canola production is estimated at 2.15 million metric tonnes (95,000,000 bushels). Production figures for 1999 were a record 2.97 million metric tonnes
- dry peas showed a significant increase in production for 2000. Production in 1999 was almost 530,800 metric tonnes, and is estimated at 620,500 metric tonnes in 2000 (22,800,000 bushels)

Contact: *Don Hansen*
(780) 422-2906

Reynold Jaipaul
(780) 427-5376

Farm cash receipts estimates – 2000

The estimates listed were prepared by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, with input from Statistics Canada and the Statistics and Data Development Unit of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

- Alberta farm cash receipts totalled a record $7.3 billion in 2000, roughly 22 per cent of the Canadian total, and a close second to Ontario.
- Direct program payments to producers reached $716 million in 2000, the fourth highest on record. Slightly over two-thirds of the payments or $460 million were paid out under Alberta's FIDP (Farm Income Disaster Program) and FIAP (Farm Income Assistance Program).
- Farm market receipts (total farm cash receipts less direct program payments to producers) from the sale of livestock products and crops totaled a record $6.6 billion in 2000, up 5.4 per cent from 1999.
- The leading Alberta farm market receipt items in 2000 were cattle and calves at $3.3 billion; wheat at $916 million; canola at $540 million; hogs at $505 million and dairy products at $317 million. The top five categories represented 76 per cent of total farm cash receipts and 84 per cent of total farm market receipts.
- In 2000, Alberta had the highest farm market receipts from livestock products in Canada at just over $4.4 billion, representing 26 per cent of the national total.

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Farm expenses and depreciation estimates – 2000

- Alberta farm net operating expenses reached a new record of $5.8 billion in 2000, an increase of 6.1 per cent over 1999.
- The largest single farm expense item in 2000 was livestock purchases from outside the province at $970 million, or roughly 17 per cent of total net operating expenses.
- The next highest expense items were commercial feed at $764 million; net interest expenses at $528 million; wages at $511 million; fertilizer at $506 million and machinery fuel at $436 million. The top six expense items represented 64 per cent of total net operating expenses for Alberta farmers.
- Energy related expenses for heating fuel, electricity, machinery fuel, and fertilizer totalled $1.1 billion or just under 19 per cent of total net operating expenses.
- Annual depreciation levels on machinery and buildings in Alberta were estimated at $993 million in 2000.

Net farm income estimates – 2000

- Net farm cash income in Alberta totalled over $1.5 billion in 2000, ranking the province second behind Ontario by just $3 million, and 22 per cent of the Canadian total.
- Realized net income which is net farm cash income plus income-in-kind less depreciation, was $561 million in 2000, up from a near record low of $71 million in 1999.
- Total net income represents realized net income plus an allowance for change in the value of inventory. The Alberta total net income was an estimated $381 million in 2000, as the value of inventory change was negative.

Contact: *Bob Prather*
(780) 427-4244

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Agri-News

March 5, 2001

Pulse crops in the rotation pay dividends

For many farmers, figuring out which crop is going to be the most profitable in the coming year is a daunting task. However, the most successful farmers practice good crop rotations year in and year out. Research has shown that a diverse crop rotation includes pulse crops and results in the highest returns back to the farm.

"There are four main reasons why pulse crops make up part of a good rotation," says Mark Olson, Pulse and Special Crops Specialist, Lacombe, Alberta. "First, there is a reduced fertilizer cost associated with growing pulses. Under ideal growing conditions, pulses fix a large percentage of their own nitrogen, ranging from 50 per cent to 90 per cent, depending on the type of pulse crop, as well as environmental conditions."

Pulse crops are inoculated with rhizobia that infect the roots and form nodules. Transport structures that form around the nodule allow the movement of sugars and nitrates in and out of the plant. Bacteria provide nitrates to the plant through fixation from the atmosphere. Depending on the pulse crop, 90 to 180 pounds per acre of nitrogen is required for growth. If 75 per cent of a pulse crop's nitrogen requirement is fixed by itself, that is the equivalent of 67 to 135 lbs/acre of nitrogen or $28 to $57 per acre at current nitrogen price of 42 cents/pound.

"Second, a well nodulated pulse crop will produce approximately 40 pounds of nitrogen for every tonne of dry matter of residue remaining," adds Olson. "Pulse crop residues break down rapidly, releasing nitrogen to the following one or two crops. A pulse crop producing 50 pounds per acre of nitrogen would be the equivalent of $21 per acre worth of nitrogen fertilizer. Additionally, pulse crops increase microbial activity of the soil which makes some nutrients, such as phosphorous, more available."

Third, yield and quality of cereal crops drastically increase following pulses. There are numerous research studies that document increased yields after pulse crops versus putting a crop on the stubble of the same crop type; Stevenson and van Kessel, 1996, showed a 43 per cent yield increase in wheat grain yield in a pea-wheat versus wheat-wheat rotation. Wright, 1990, saw a 21 per cent yield increase in the yield of cereal in

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the first year and 12 per cent increase in the second year following a pulse crop. Brandt, 1997, revealed a 41 to 52 per cent increase in barley yield and 20 to 47 per cent increase in wheat yield following peas compared to continuous barley and wheat.

"Although nitrogen plays a critical role in these higher yields, another reason that pulses should be in the crop rotation is pulse crops break the disease cycle," says Olson. "Soil borne diseases, such as the common root rots in cereals, have been known to decrease cereal yield by 10 to 15 per cent."

In regards to improved grain quality, research data, as well as, farmer experience point to at least a one per cent increase in wheat protein following a pulse crop in the rotation.

"The fourth reason for considering pulses in the rotation is improved soil tilth or mellowness of the soil," says Olson. "This improved tilth is due to pulse crop debris that allows farmers to pull seeding and tillage equipment with less draft. A mellow soil may mean less tillage passes, which, combined with less draft requirements, leads to substantial fuel savings."

These are just a few of the dividends that pulses bring to the crop rotation. For more information contact the nearest pulse and special crop specialist.

Alberta Agriculture published an award winning publication ***Pulse Crops in Alberta*** (Agdex 142/20-1). Cost of the publication is $25 (plus GST) and is available at Alberta Agriculture district RAS offices and from the Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by calling toll free 1-800-292-5697. If ordering by phone or mail, please add $2 plus GST for shipping and handling.

Contact: Mark Olson
(403) 782-3301

LINKAGES

LINKAGES: Leadership, Innovation and Networking for Knowledge, Agricultural Growth and Environmental Sustainability was officially launched at FarmTech 2001, attended by approximately 800 producers on January 31, 2001.

"Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RT LINKAGES) is a program designed to increase the adoption of sustainable cropping systems, such as direct seeding, by Alberta farmers," says Peter Gamache, RT LINKAGES team leader, Edmonton. "Using reduced tillage cropping systems has many benefits, including: energy conservation; carbon sequestration; improved water, air and soil quality; increased profitability; and, enhanced bio-diversity."

The new program will use the expertise and resources of its 10 government, industry, educational and producer partners with additional funding from the Agriculture & Food Council. As a successor to the Alberta Reduced Tillage Initiative (ARTI), it will build on the considerable experience gained through ARTI to further increase awareness and adoption of soil and water conservation methods by Alberta farmers.

"ARTI was a very successful program and producers at FarmTech 2001 gave very positive feedback after hearing about the new program," adds Gamache. "As always, farmers and producers face ever changing and complex issues surrounding greenhouse gas emissions, soil carbon storage, global trade, environmental concerns and new technologies. With emphasis on sustainable cropping systems, RT LINKAGES will remain focused on soil and water conservation and expand activities as new technologies and emerging issues demand."

The program employs three experienced agronomists, strategically placed throughout the province, and a team leader. The team, to date, includes: Pat Pavan, southern area, Lethbridge; Rick Taillieu, central area, Olds; Ron Heller, north area, Vermilion; and, Peter Gamache, team leader, Edmonton. An agronomist will soon be added in the Peace region.

"The team will be working extra hard to increase the networking between farmers, by working with clubs, attending meetings and delivering information where appropriate by electronic means," says Gamache. "A web-based information and research database of sustainable cropping information will be developed. Team members will be active presenting direct seeding information and greenhouse gas information at meetings and field days and the program will integrate with the winter cereals initiative spearheaded by Ducks Unlimited."

The LINKAGES agronomists will help further develop partnerships and multi-functional networks between experienced direct seeders, farmers who have not adopted reduced tillage, extension specialists and the supply and services industries that support farming.

"Through RT LINKAGES, Alberta farmers will have ready access to relevant, reliable and up-to-date information on sustainable agriculture," says Gamache.

Contact: Peter Gamache
(780) 422-7922

Towards a market focus: Products vs. commodities

Commodities and products differ in why they are produced and how they are marketed. Most farm production is sold as commodities. Quality is standardized, so within each grade one lot of a commodity is as good as the next. Delivery is usually to processors rather than end users. Handling is typically in bulk. Pricing is usually based on the volume of the sale and varies considerably over the seasons. Most commodities are produced because they can be. They are grown because the climate is suitable, or the producer owns

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the right machinery, or even because Grandfather grew it. Commodity marketing is often viewed and handled as a *we grew this, now let's try and sell it*.

"Marketing a product begins with asking what the customer wants and at what price will they be willing to purchase it," says Doug Walkey, market specialist for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "Products are usually marketed under a brand name, so the source of the product is identifiable and repeat purchases are possible. Most importantly, product marketing offers the buyer some additional features or qualities that makes that particular product more attractive than others."

An added or special feature can take many forms. It may be a quality specification, such as a particular bushel weight or protein level. Consider a specialty oat grown for racehorse feed. The oats may offer plump kernels and high bushel weight compared to ordinary oats. The oats will be bagged and delivered to suit the needs of owners at the track. The timing of delivery could be important to the customer. A clean, white-colored kernel is preferred over weathered grains. And finally, the oats could be processed and polished to reduce dust and increase palatability. Together these additional features may command double or triple the bulk commodity price.

"Additional features are usually associated with some brand name," adds Walkey. "In the supermarkets there is a sizable selection of crisp roasted rice for baking and breakfast cereals. Many are offered bulk or in *no name* packaging and sold as a commodity. Buyers will select among these by price alone. In the cereal aisle, consumers will find Kellogg's Rice Krispies™, a packaged product that sells at a significant price premium. This brand carries a reputation for quality, consistency and value. The reputation earns a higher price for the product."

Because commodities are not differentiated, sellers constantly compete for the buyers' attention. After all it makes no difference to the buyer who they purchase from, a commodity is a commodity. Survival in a commodity business depends on being a *lowest cost* producer. In a mature industry, be it lumber, canola, iron or hogs, the lowest cost strategy translates to very narrow profit margins.

Commodities do have an advantage in price discovery. They are often priced through trading exchanges, such as the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange. The exchange makes commodity values public and facilitates futures transactions. These in turn enable forward contracting, hedging and other forms of risk management.

"Some producers are working to convert from commodities to products," says Walkey. "One method is to change and produce something else, perhaps elk instead of cattle, or a herb instead of grain. A second method is to add value to the product as in the oat example."

Yet another possibility is to take part in production alliances. In this scenario, a farmer contracts to produce something for a specific buyer, probably under some formula pricing arrangement. In an alliance, each participant in the value chain works toward a common goal and shares in the returns. The ultimate gain is a more consistently profitable enterprise. The trade off is giving up the high prices in return for not being forced to take low price swings.

"As in all business, market management is a series of compromises. Marketing begins with the decision of what to produce, and that requires a good understanding of your client's needs," says Walkey.

If you'd like more information, contact the local district office of Alberta Agriculture.

This is article four of a 10 part series on *Moving Towards a Market Focus*. The previous articles in the series are available on-line at Alberta Agriculture's website **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca>**.

Contact: *Doug Walkey*
(403) 782-3301

Ministers discuss proposal for immediate farm assistance

During a tele-conference held on February 21, 2001 provincial agriculture ministers further developed their proposal for immediate assistance for producers.

The conference call let provincial agriculture ministers from across the country discuss the proposal and develop a joint approach that will be taken to the federal/provincial/territorial ministers meeting on March 6 and 7, 2001.

"Alberta farmers need assistance this spring. It's time for Ottawa to provide relief from soaring input costs, particularly chemicals, fertilizer and farm fuel," says Ty Lund, Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "The agriculture ministers are working to ensure the issue of immediate assistance is placed first on the agenda for the meeting in Quebec City.

"Our last discussion with the federal minister left the impression he would not allow the agenda to be changed for specific discussion on this issue. While there is a spot to discuss long-term integrated risk management, I don't feel we can have a meaningful discussion about long-term viability if we don't first talk about our short-term needs."

The ministers are calling on the federal government to respond to a proposal for an immediate assistance program that allows for flexibility in the various regions. In Alberta, the federal government is being asked to work with the province to

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offset high input costs, specifically a program to address the high cost of chemicals and fertilizer and the removal of federal excise taxes on farm fuel.

The ministers have requested that the federal government respond to their proposal at the March meeting in Quebec City.

Contact: *Michael Lohner*
Minister's Office, Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-2137

2001 – 335 years since Canada's first census

Almost every country in the world regularly carries out a census to collect information about the social and economic situation of the people living in its various regions. A census is the only reliable source of detailed data on small areas or groups within the population.

"In Canada, the census is taken every five years, as required by the *Statistics Act*," says Kendall Olson, communications officer, 2001 Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada, Prairie Region. "The *Constitution Act* requires that a census be taken in years ending in '1'. Every man, woman and child living in Canada on Census Day, as well as those who are abroad either with the military, attached to a diplomatic mission, at sea, or in port aboard Canadian-registered merchant vessels, are involved in the census. Persons in Canada claiming refugee status who hold a student or employment authorization or minister's permit, and their dependents, are also part of the census."

Information from census questionnaires is combined to get an overall picture, a statistical portrait, of Canada, its people and their social and economic situation. To ensure the confidentiality of personal information, these data are released only after they have been added to similar information from other households, and rounded. No detailed data are released for areas with a population of less than 40 people.

"The census is related to more than 80 federal and provincial legislative measures," says Olson. "Some of the major users of census data include the private sector, social and community groups, business associations, labour organizations, libraries, educational institutions, researchers and academics, private industries, and religious, ethnic and cultural groups."

Some examples of the many uses of information derived from the census include:

- **Representation in Parliament** – the boundaries and number of federal electoral districts in each province and territory are based on census data from the decennial census (years ending in 1);
- **Transfer payments** – population counts from the census are the base for estimates that are used in the calculation of federal transfer payments to the provinces and territories and provincial grants to municipalities;
- **Agriculture** – food production, farm income, land under cultivation and soil conservation practices are measured by the census. Because they are available for municipal areas, Census of Agriculture data are invaluable in evaluating the impact of natural disasters such as the floods in Manitoba's Red River area;
- **Health care** – census data are used to forecast health care needs and costs, and to measure the need for medical research programs;
- **Labour markets** – the census helps economists, union negotiators and human resource planners develop informed employment and training policies and programs;
- **Social services** – the census provides the information necessary to implement programs such as day-care, subsidized housing and services for seniors, children and disabled persons; and,
- **News media** – the census provides background material needed to report on economic activity, income, housing, education, family composition and other issues at local, provincial and national levels.

"Census Day is May 15, 2001," adds Olson. "Between May 1 and May 12, 11.8 million households will receive a Census of Population questionnaire. Some 276,000 farm operators will also receive a Census of Agriculture form at the same time."

Not everyone fills in the same form. The short questionnaire contains seven questions and is completed by 80 per cent of households. The long questionnaire contains the same questions as the short form plus 52 additional questions, including three new ones on religion, birthplace of parents and language of work. The long form enumerates the remaining 20 per cent of the population.

A toll free Census Help Line has been set up to provide assistance to those who need help filling in the form or who have questions about the census. In each region, the Census Help Line will be staffed by operators who are fluent in languages common to that area, in addition to French and English. The Census Help Line will be operating from May 1st to 31st from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. The number is 1-800-591-2001.

The dissemination of 2001 Census data will begin about one year after Census Day with the release of population counts in Spring 2002. Other census variables will be released beginning in October 2002.

Census data are available in printed and electronic form, including diskette and CD-ROM, as well as custom products and services. It can also be accessed through the Statistics

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Canada Web site at <**www.statcan.ca**>. Census information and publications can be studied, copied or purchased at Statistics Canada's regional offices. Census data are also available on CD-ROMs and in print publications in many large libraries across Canada.

"Statistics Canada places the highest priority on maintaining the confidentiality of individual census forms, at all stages of the census process," says Olson. "The *Statistics Act* requires that identifiable information be kept confidential. Statistics Canada is allowed, by law, to use the information from census questionnaires for statistical purposes only."

Contact: *Kendall Olson*
(780) 495-4655

The future's not ours to see – or is it?

Futurists have been fairly accurate as they watch trends and determine what lies ahead. For agriculture and food industry players, the emphasis is on what trends or sign posts need to be identified, what information collected and assessed to remain prosperous.

"Predictions of the futurists support many of the changes being seen in the agriculture and food industry and rural communities. They also offer some interesting food for thought, (excuse the pun)," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food andRural Development, Westlock.

In the book *The Dream Society*, Rolf Jensen addresses the future of business after the information age. Jensen predicts that it won't be the latest technology or newest product, but the story behind the product that will provide the competitive edge. Consumers will pay for the story that sparks the imagination, that reflects how we see ourselves and how we want others to see us. Work will be driven by stories and emotions, not just data. The story side of the product will become an ever-important part of the decision to buy.

The *Dream Society* sees the following emotional market trends:

- *stories and adventures will be demanded and supplied like products themselves.* The adventure for sale market
- *companies will become even more concerned with interpersonal relationships – romance, family, friendship, neighbors* - The market for togetherness, friendship and love
- *people have a need to provide and receive care* – The market for care
- *the products you buy and use tell a little story about yourself* – The Who-Am-I market
- *in an insecure and changeable world, there is a demand for peace of mind and permanence* – The market for peace of mind
- *interest groups have always existed but never in such numbers and never wielding such influence* – The market for convictions is exploding

"The three authors of the book, *the future ain't what is used to be,* identify 40 cultural trends representing market opportunities," continues Engel.

Some of the tips relating to the trends identified include:

- seize the day! Carpe diem. Consumers want to hear, touch, see, smell and taste the rush now
- join hands with Mother Nature to share in the herbal health glow
- take the road less travelled by anticipating the small-town revival. "Have modem, will travel" is the mantra of the new millennium
- position yourself with the images of a small-town utopia
- regional food is a wellspring of civic pride
- scratch is in. What we're tasting in small town (USA) is a celebration of traditional roots and regional ethnic cuisine (a high society term for just plain good eating off the land).
- pump up food sales with un-pumped, real ingredients
- create affordable luxuries or "exotic commodities" to make consumers feel like a king for a day. Very few consumers are able to spend $50,000 for a Jaguar, but almost all of them can splurge on the occasional filet mignon or pumpkin walnut sourdough

"Reading about trends is as useful as watching paint dry," adds Engel. "It's what you do with the information that's important. Look for ideas. Combine, substitute, adapt, modify, magnify or rearrange these ideas and trends to see where your business fits, uncover a niche or explore new directions."

To learn more about trends, phone (780) 349-4465 to receive the latest issue of the ***NorthWest Processor*** newsletter.

To find a listing of trend books, contact The Business Link at 1-800-272-9675 and ask for the Trends Pathfinder. It contains a listing of over 30 business link resources that can be borrowed. E-mail address for The Business Link is <**buslink@cbsc.ic.gc.ca**>.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

Rural safety stakeholders gather for forum

In recognition of Farm Safety Week, a second annual Alberta Rural Safety Forum will be held on March 8, 2001 in Edmonton, thanks to a grant from Health Canada's Rural and Remote Health Innovations Initiative.

The purpose of the forum is to:

- facilitate the sharing of rural safety promotion program knowledge, skills and experience
- foster cooperation and collaboration in rural safety promotion among organizations, communities, and regions
- strengthen supportive relationships and formalize a rural safety network within Alberta

"Close to 100 rural safety stakeholder organizations and programs throughout Alberta have been invited to the one day event," says Jennifer Drozdowski, with the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research. "The day will include presentations, displays, time for participants to share information about their safety programs and a discussion about establishing an Alberta Rural Safety Network."

The forum has been organized by Westlock & District Family and Community Support Services (FCSS); Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; United Farmers of Alberta (UFA); Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research (ACICR); Health Canada; and the Multicultural Heritage Centre.

Contact: *Jennifer Drozdowski*
Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, Lethbridge
(403) 381-3921
<jdrozdow@telusplanet.net>

Linda West
Westlock & District FCSS
(780) 349-5900
<linda.west@telusplanet.net>

Agri-News Briefs

Emerging issues and opportunities in beef

The Lethbridge Research Centre is hosting an expanded National Beef Science Seminar on November 14 to 15, 2001 at the Lethbridge Exhibition Park. The seminar, ***Emerging Issues and Opportunities***, brings together the best local, national and global perspectives on beef industry trends and challenges. The seminar will highlight the increasing importance of research to the economic and environmental sustainability of the beef industry in Canada. More details about the program, registration and accommodation is available by contacting the seminar registrar, Jennifer Squires, P.O. Box 3000, Lethbridge, AB T1J 4B1; phone (403) 317-2297; or e-mail <**NBSS@em.agr.ca**>. Details will be posted to the Lethbridge Research Centre's website as available. The address is <**http://res2.agr.ca/lethbridge/**>.

Census stats

Some little known facts about the Census:

- approximately 50,000 people will work on the 2001 Census
- the Census is environmentally sensitive, the 2001 Census envelopes and guides are recyclable
- the 1996 Census counted 28,846,761 people, of that number, immigrants represent about 17.4 per cent of the population – the largest percentage in 50 years
- in 1996, nine million people were graduates from a university or other post-secondary institution

It will be interesting to compare data from the last census in 1996 to the new census information. For further information, or to check on other interesting census information, visit the Statistics Canada Web site at <**www.statcan.ca**>. Census information and publications can also be studied, copied or purchased at Statistics Canada's regional offices.

Where is the market in diversified crops

Thinking of diversifying into a special crop, vegetable, herb, or spice? Getting a market focus may be just the thing to gain a new perspective on agriculture. ***Buyers Forum... Where's the Market in Diversified Crops***, a one-day workshop offered by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, features a number of well known industry buyers who will provide details on product specifications (quantity, quality, moisture content) and value-added processing or manufacturing requirements needed in order to make that raw ingredient usable and marketable. The workshop is targeted to agriculture innovators who recognize that diversified crop markets are small and volatile but offer the potential for significant returns. Sessions also feature several speakers who will present their innovative strategies on marketing. Leona Staples, a founding member of the Innisfail Growers Co-operative, will share her experience in a successful new market development venture that brought their specialty horticulture crops to over 20 Farmer's Markets across Alberta. Matt Richards, a founding partner of Prairie Natural Processing, will tell how their innovative group of farmers banded together to approach potential customers in the black currant industry. The workshop is offered in Red Deer on March 27, 2001. Registration deadline is March 23, 2001. Register by calling Victoria at (403) 340-5364. For more information contact Lisa Houle, rural development specialist - business with Alberta Agriculture, Red Deer, (403) 340-5369. Alberta government numbers are toll free by dialling 310-0000 and then the number.

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Agri-News

March 12, 2001

Livestock safety focus of Farm Safety Week

A farm is a great place to bring up a family but it can also be a dangerous place if farm safety practices are not followed. ***Farm Safety Week*** runs from March 14 to 21, 2001 and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is encouraging every rural family to make their farm a safe place to grow.

This year, Farm Safety Week is focused on livestock safety. In 1999, livestock contributed to 45 per cent (690 cases) of all reported farm related injuries. "These statistics are a concern but with safe practices and proper risk management, they can be reduced," says Solomon Kyeremanteng, manager of Alberta Agriculture's farm safety program.

Livestock must be treated with respect and dealt with cautiously. Even friendly animals can be dangerous if put under stress or threatened. Breeding males of any species pose the greatest risk. The second most dangerous are female animals with young offspring.

Farm safety, an individual and industry responsibility, is a year-long necessity. Whether farmers are harvesting or calving, there is always a level of risk involved. It is important that parents and their children work together to identify, reduce and, where possible, eliminate hazards around the farm.

"By raising awareness about farm safety we hope to decrease the number of farm related accidents in Alberta," says Kyeremanteng. "Farm safety messages are only effective if they are acted on. Every person on the farm should follow safe work and play practices. Remember, ***A Safe Farm is a Great Place to Grow***."

For farm safety information visit: **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/ruraldev/farm_safety>**

Contact: *Solomon Kyeremanteng*
(780) 427-4227
For toll-free connection, dial 310-0000

This is Farm Safety Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Livestock safety – it's your responsibility

All too often, we forget about the potential dangers involved with handling and caring for domestic livestock. Farm animals are an integral part of the agriculture industry, but they can also be a threat to the safety of those working with them.

Although domestic livestock are herd animals and have similarities, each animal has its own set of safety considerations: cows can be nervous and spook easily; hogs can bite hard enough to cause serious injury; horses can use their feet and teeth as weapons. Understanding livestock behaviour eases handling and reduces animal stress.

It is important that everyone on the farm follow safety practices around livestock – especially children. Teach children to be alert when they are around livestock. An experienced animal handler should train children before they are given responsibilities around livestock.

Preventing animal related accidents is an important part of agricultural safety. When working around animals, remember these tips:

- Wear protective clothing and footwear.
- Use calm, deliberate speech and actions – do not startle an animal.
- Approach large animals at the shoulder and from the left.
- Avoid the hind legs of the animal.
- Restrain animals that are known for kicking or biting.
- Be cautious when separating an individual animal from the rest of the herd.
- Supervise children when going near large animals.
- Never tie a halter shank or lead-line to your body or become entangled in it.
- Be cautious around stallions, bulls, rams, boars and animals with newborns.
- Always have an escape route when working with animals in close quarters.
- Ensure good footing for handling operations. Be cautious where slippery conditions are unavoidable.

Contact: Solomon Kyeremanteng
Manager, Farm Safety Program
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 427-4227

Take stock of your safety

Handling an animal 10 times your own weight can be like a Volkswagen Beetle coming up against a Mack truck. If safety is neglected, it's clear who the winner will be.

The Chinook Health Region in southern Alberta is a livestock intensive area where more agricultural injuries involve farm animals than machinery. Across Canada, one third of all agricultural injuries that require medical treatment are livestock related. Fractures and crushing injuries from livestock are an all-too-common problem in livestock operations.

The North American Farm and Environmental Safety Centre has three programs designed to reduce injuries and save lives by raising awareness and providing training to children, farm families and individual producers.

"Children love the *Safety Smarts* program, which brings safety to life in the classroom," says Bronwyn Freeze, program coordinator at the Centre. "Schools in southern Alberta can book presentations that teach farm safety through activities, games, word and picture puzzles and heart-to-heart talks."

Initiatives at the Centre include the *Farm Family Safety* program that is just being launched. With the Chinook Health Region as a partner, the Centre is helping farm families foster enhanced safety awareness and develop safety knowledge and skills through *Further Education* and other learning venues. With funding from Health Canada and the partnership of the Lethbridge Community College, the *Rural Hazard Management Project* is providing safety-oriented training to producers throughout Alberta at a nominal cost.

"Education is the key to creating a safe farm," says Solomon Kyeremanteng, manager of Alberta Agriculture's Farm Safety Program. "These initiatives will provide families with the knowledge they need to make their farms safe places to grow."

Contact: Bronwyn Freeze
(403) 752-4585

Solomon Kyeremanteng
(780) 427-4227

Chris Hogg
Safety Smarts Coordinator
(403) 752-4585

Frances Pougnet
Farm Family Safety Project Coordinator
(403) 752-4585

Ron McMullin
Rural Hazard Management Project Coordinator
(403) 752-4585

A farm is not a playground – make a safe play area for children

One of the greatest safety precautions that can be taken for farm children is to provide a fenced, safe play area for them near the house. Unlike most other children, farm kids live and play in an industrial workplace. This makes it even more important for parents and child-care providers to be directly involved in the farm safety education of children.

Here are a few ways to educate children on farm safety:

- **Be consistent** – as your child's most important role model, you have to be consistent and unwavering in practicing farm safety. Children love to look for exceptions to the rules, don't let them find any when it comes to safety.
- **Correct any hazards** – you owe it to yourself and your family to keep your farmstead and equipment in safe condition. Farm safety walk-abouts are a good way for your family to identify hazards and discuss options for making the farm safe for everyone.
- **Use the resources** – thanks to the increasing awareness of the importance of farm safety matters, many organizations offer local farm safety programs. Use the warning stickers and safety materials that many of these programs and workshops offer.
- **Encourage safety** – make a point to compliment your children when they perform good safety practices, especially in instances that required added work or good independent judgement.
- **Analyze the close calls** – fortunately, "close calls" happen more often than accidents. These can be excellent learning experiences. Take a moment to describe what happened, where the safety lapse was and how to prevent it in the future.

Contact: *Rod Scarlett*
Wild Rose Agricultural Producers
(780) 451-5912

Solomon Kyeremanteng
Farm Safety Program
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-4227

Growing safely: Injuries on the farm

Unfortunately, farm injuries are extremely common in Alberta. In 1999, there were 1549 farm related injuries and 17 deaths. Although statistics from 1996 to 1999 showed a decline in farm injuries and deaths, preliminary reports show that the number of farm related deaths increased in 2000.

Statistics compiled by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program show that the leading causes of farm injury deaths are machinery related. Being pinned or struck by machinery, tractor rollovers, and entanglement in machinery accounted for 73.5 per cent of farm injury deaths. The leading cause of non-machinery farm injury is the handling and care of farm animals.

Farmers over the age of 60 are most at risk of injury on the farm. Over three times as many deaths are seen in the over-60 age group, partly due to farm population distribution.

"The very nature of farming is dangerous, given the machinery and animals involved," says Cathy Gladwin, acting executive director with the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research (ACICR). "There are, however, some precautions that farmers can take to ensure the safety of those working on the farm, as well as for children on the farm."

Farmers are cautioned to use machinery according to manufacturers' instructions, never wear loose-fitting clothing around equipment and avoid operating machinery when fatigued.

The ACICR is a provincial organization aimed at reducing the toll injuries take on Albertans by addressing injury prevention, emergency medical services, acute care and rehabilitation. For more information, contact (780) 492-6019 or visit **<www.med.ualberta.ca/acicr>**.

Contact: *Liza Sunley*
ACICR
(780) 492-9758

Solomon Kyeremanteng
Farm Safety Program
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-4227

Over four farm injuries in Alberta every day

Farm injuries have serious consequences on the farm business and family. Statistics show there are approximately 1,500 reported farm injuries per year, or four per day. "These are alarming statistics that demonstrate the need for farmers to prepare themselves with a workplace disability and liability insurance plan, before an injury occurs," says Dawn Makarowski, marketing representative for the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB).

The agriculture industry in Alberta is voluntary under the Workers' Compensation Act. Even though farmers are not required by law to cover themselves and/or their workers, over 1,600 farm businesses have voluntarily decided to purchase Workers' Compensation Insurance.

The reasons for deciding to purchase coverage vary. Some employers want to provide their workers with disability insurance if they experience a work-related injury. Others purchase coverage to have lawsuit protection from an injured worker. There are also farmers who purchase Personal Coverage. Personal Coverage allows the farm owner to claim the same disability benefits an injured worker would be entitled to, if the owner experiences a farm injury.

Claimant benefits include wage replacement (90 per cent of net income), comprehensive medical and rehabilitation services, payment for damaged clothing and glasses, home modification (for injuries that result in the use of a wheelchair) and, in the case of death, payment is made to eligible dependants and funeral expenses are paid.

The premium rate in the agriculture industry has dropped by about 50 per cent since 1994. The rate for 2001 is $3.59 per $100 of insurable earnings. For example, to cover a worker making $25,000 per year, coverage would cost about $75 per month.

"When thinking about farm safety, injury prevention is the most important. But, advance preparation is also important. Recognizing the need to have a good disability and liability workplace insurance program in place is half the battle," says Makorowski. "Farm owners are assured their business is protected from lawsuit from an injured worker, while the injured worker's needs are provided for."

For more information call the WCB Customer Contact Centre at (780) 498-3999, toll-free dial 310-0000 first, then the number.

Contact: *Dawn Makarowski*
Marketing Representative
Workers' Compensation Board
(780) 498-7733

Solomon Kyeremanteng
Farm Safety Program
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-4227

Share the road safely with farm vehicles

With spring just around the corner, you will soon be sharing the roads with slower moving farm vehicles. Motorists need to be cautious and alert around these vehicles, especially in the early morning and evening when equipment is being moved and visibility is reduced.

In 1999, there were 23 farm equipment vehicles involved in casualty collisions resulting in one fatality. Help prevent collisions by driving defensively and using common sense.

"The majority of collisions are preventable," says Solomon Kyeremanteng, manager of farm safety program with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Accidents are caused in large part by driver error, which is why safe drivers know what is going on around them and look out for other road users."

Skill, patience and being alert are elements of defensive driving that help avoid a potential collision:

- maintain a two-second following distance under normal driving conditions;
- in bad weather or on poor roads, increase your following distance;
- posted speed limits are set for ideal road and weather conditions;
- it is up to you to reduce your speed in hazardous conditions;
- it is difficult to judge traffic speeds from a distance, so be cautious;
- slow down as soon as you see slow-moving farm vehicle with an identification sign (orange triangle outlined in red) and stay a safe distance behind the vehicle.

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Before passing a farm vehicle:

- check the left side of the road for upcoming gates, driveways or other places a farm vehicle might turn
- watch the farmer's hand and/or light signals carefully
- remember, equipment may be extra-long, so be sure you can see the entire vehicle in your rearview mirror before you get back into your lane.

"Be PATIENT! Even if you have to slow down for a few kilometres, it only takes a moment of your time," adds Eileen McDonald with Alberta Infrastructure, Edmonton. "For your safety and for the safety of others, share the road…safety starts with you!"

For more information on road safety, visit the Alberta Infrastructure website at <**www.infras.gov.ab.ca**>

Contact: *Solomon Kyeremanteng*
(780) 427-4227

Eileen McDonald
(780) 427-7674

Gord Kijek
Unit head – Safety Education
Alberta Infrastructure
(780) 427-6776

Don't get a charge out of your farm

Electricity is a necessity for modern-day living, and farmyards are full of electrical wires both overhead and underground. Power lines are specifically placed outside of normal human reach to keep people safe from the dangers of power line contact, but every year injuries occur because of carelessness.

Between April 1, 1999 and March 31, 2000, the Safety Services Branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs received 282 reports of power line contacts, 31 specifically related to farm implements contacting power lines. Many of the remaining contacts could have been agriculture related because they involved brush and tree trimming, trucks with raised boxes, and equipment mounted on trucks or tracks.

"We estimate that only about one-tenth of all the electrical incidents that occur in the province are reported. There are many more cases than these statistics indicate," says Rene Leduc, chief electrical inspector at Alberta Municipal Affairs.

To avoid electrical injury, treat electricity with respect and follow these safety tips:

- Know where all the overhead power lines are before you begin any job.
- Keep an eye out for fallen wires.
- Contact the power company about sagging or fallen wires, broken poles, and accidents or fires that affect power lines.
- Always lower high equipment, such as augers and grain truck boxes, before moving them.
- Make sure there is enough clearance when moving farm equipment, such as wing-type cultivators and air seeders.
- Never let anyone ride on top of farm equipment, especially when there is a danger of power line contact.
- Never stack hay or grain near power lines.
- Avoid placing structures, such as grain bins, under or near power lines.
- Do not trim branches or cut down trees near electrical wires. Call the power company to do this.
- Install television and radio antennas carefully.
- Be cautious when carrying and using aluminum ladders, grain probes, irrigation pipes, steel reinforcement bars and bin hoists.
- Always call the power company for help with power lines or before digging.

Electricity kills

Since May 1997, six people have died in farm-related electrical accidents:

- Two men were electrocuted when the metal antenna tower they were installing contacted an 8,000-volt overhead power line.
- A farm worker was electrocuted by a 120-volt shock when he was working on electrical controls while laying on wet ground in a confined space.
- A truck driver's helper was electrocuted when he stepped off a truck that had become energized by contacting a power line.
- A truck driver was electrocuted while sweeping of the top of his truck when his metal-handled broom contacted a 14,400-volt overhead power line.
- A worker installing an eaves-trough was electrocuted when his extension ladder contacted an 8,000-volt overhead power line.

For more information on farm electrical safety, visit the Municipal Affairs website <**www.gov.ab.ca/ma**>.

Contact: *Karen Sigurdson*
Alberta Municipal Affairs
(780) 427-8862

Solomon Kyeremanteng
Farm Safety Program
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-4227

Fire a serious threat to farms

Two thousand head of cattle down-wind from a raging prairie wildfire – that was the situation Milk River Fire Chief Randy Kukucska faced last July during the Milk River Ridge burn, one of the worst he's ever seen.

"The wind was probably gusting 90 kilometres an hour and the flames were close to 100 feet in the air," Kukuscka says of the blaze that started from a lightning strike. "Luckily, the cattle, buildings and machinery weren't harmed, but the fire burned a patch about 21 kilometres long and 10 kilometres wide. It took 15 fire departments and countless volunteers many hours to douse the flames and put fireguards around all the homesteads."

There's no doubt that fire is a serious threat to Alberta's 59,000 farms. Between 1990 and 1999, the Fire Commissioner's Office in Alberta Municipal Affairs recorded nearly $70 million in property damage because of farm fires. Sixteen people died and 73 were injured in the nearly 3,700 farm blazes during that 10-year period. Farm homes were the most vulnerable structures, followed by animal barns, storage barns and farm equipment.

"Farms are particularly vulnerable to fire for a number of reasons," says Alberta's Fire Commissioner Tom Makey. "Farm buildings and their contents tend to be very combustible and farms contain many sources to spark a fire. Wind and low moisture levels also help outdoor fires spread quickly, and water for firefighting is often difficult to come by in remote locations. It also takes longer for fire departments to respond to fires outside of town." All these factors, plus a lack of working smoke alarms in residences, make farms especially dangerous if fire strikes.

Here's how farmers can reduce the risk of fire:

- Install smoke alarms in all residences and keep them in good working order.
- Make sure that all wiring and electrical fixtures in homes and farm buildings are installed and inspected by a licensed professional.
- Check wiring periodically for fraying and indications of wear or rodent damage.
- Protect light bulbs and heat lamps in the barn with wire guards and keep heat lamps away from combustible material.
- Ensure that water pumps are powered by a circuit separate from the barn panel to keep pumps working during a barn fire.
- Avoid excessive moisture in hay or straw because it can lead to spontaneous combustion.
- Locate incinerators at least 15 metres from buildings.
- Mow grass within 10 metres of buildings to 10 centimetres or less to keep fire from spreading to surrounding vegetation.
- Keep engines and electric motors free of accumulated dust and grease.
- Inspect and properly maintain hay and grain dryers.
- Don't store flammable liquids in the barn.
- Keep storage tanks of flammable liquids at least 23 metres from buildings.

Farm homes need smoke alarms too!

Municipal Affairs statistics from 1990 to 1999 indicate that of farm homes involved in fire incidents:

- only 23 per cent contained smoke alarms at the time of fire;
- where smoke alarms were installed, 42 per cent had dead batteries or no batteries at all; and,
- all the fire deaths occurred where smoke alarms were not installed or did not activate.

For more information on farm fire safety, visit the Municipal Affairs website <**www.gov.ab.ca/ma**>.

Contact: *Karen Sigurdson*
Alberta Municipal Affairs
(780) 427-8862

Solomon Kyeremanteng
Farm Safety Program
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-4227

Agri-News Briefs

Seventh annual Canadian Farm Safety and Rural Health conference

Injury Prevention and Control 2001 – Partnerships and Practices is an upcoming conference that will provide participants with information about agricultural safety. The Agricultural Safety Track at the conference will focus on issues related to livestock handling. The conference will be held at the Fantasyland Hotel in West Edmonton Mall from November 4-6, 2001. The Canadian Coalition for Agricultural Safety and Rural Health addresses problems of illness, injuries and accidental death in agricultural workers, farmers and their families, as well as other rural health issues. The conference is a cooperative undertaking of the Canadian Coalition for Agricultural Safety and Rural Health, Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research, Mission Possible, The Support Network and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Visit <**www.ccasrh.org**> for program details as they become available. For further information, contact the Canadian Coalition for Agricultural Safety and Rural Health (306) 966-8499, <**CCASRH@sask.usask.ca**>.

Farm safety tips

To make your farm a safe place to grow, remember these tips:

- Every spring and fall take your family on a safety walk around the farm. Identify hazards and discuss options for making the farm safe for everyone.
- Provide a fenced, safe, play area for children near the house.
- Identify animals that are known to pose dangers.
- Have livestock handling procedures in place for everyone to follow.
- Post warning stickers on machinery, bins, augers, power poles, wells and fuel tanks.
- Always observe the "NO RIDERS" rule on the farm. Tractors and machine operations should be off-limits to young children.
- Remove the keys from farm machinery when not in use.
- Properly train and supervise new operators before allowing them to use machinery or drive tractors.
- Always shut off the power before adjusting or servicing machinery.
- Keep machinery shields and guards in place.
- Always leave a tractor power take-off (PTO) in neutral.
- Before operating machinery, walk around the machine to make a visual check of the equipment and make sure bystanders and objects are at a safe distance away.
- Leave any equipment that might fall, such as front-end loaders and headers, in the down position or block them up.
- Store hazardous chemicals in locked cabinets and explain the meaning of hazard symbols to your family.
- Enclose manure disposal lagoons and farm ponds with safety fences and post warning signs.
- Cover all wells and septic tanks with heavy cement lids.
- Secure silos and grain bins against entry by children. Store portable ladders away from these areas.
- Set a good example for safety's sake. A safe farm is a great place to grow!

More farm safety tips are available on the Canadian Federation of Agriculture website at <**www.cfa-fca.ca/fsafety/eng/toc.html**>.

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Agri-News

March 19, 2001

Farmers encouraged to test for fusarium

A new program has been created to encourage farmers to test crops for Fusarium head blight (FHB). Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development will pay a portion of the cost to test samples of wheat and barley seed for *Fusarium graminearum* at approved labs.

FHB has been described as the most destructive cereal disease in North America, causing hundreds of millions of dollars in losses each year. Over the last few decades *F. graminearum*, a pathogen that leads to FHB, has been creeping westward from the mid-western US, Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan. It thrives in hot and humid conditions and there is no cure once crops are infected.

Alberta is considered to be largely fusarium free. Signs that the disease is moving westward have motivated Alberta's grain industry and Alberta Agriculture to take steps to identify and contain the disease before it causes damage. This precaution is necessary because fusarium damaged grain is not accepted by the milling or malting industries and is not accepted for feed of certain livestock, especially pigs.

Shaffeek Ali, Manager of Alberta Agriculture's pest management prevention unit, said he hopes this program will not only encourage farmers to test their seed and feed, but will also raise awareness about the threat of fusarium.

"Thanks to Alberta's cool and dry conditions, FHB has not been a problem for producers," said Ali. "But, it is important that we remain diligent about keeping it out of Alberta. FHB has the potential to cause serious economic harm. We are taking whatever steps are necessary to stop that from happening."

Alberta Agriculture has committed $100,000 to the program to offset the cost of the tests for farmers. Three labs are participating in the program and will test seed for the presence of *F. graminearum*. The testing program has already begun and runs until June 30, 2001 depending on the response. The cost to the farmer for testing is $20.00 per sample.

"Producers whose seed has been identified as infected will receive notice directly from the lab as well as an information package on how to handle the remainder of the infected seed," said Ali. "The results of individual tests remain confidential. Alberta Agriculture is only collecting information on infection rates in municipalities."

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The seed-testing program is part of a larger plan involving industry, governments, commissions and farmers. The study will help determine what areas are prone to fusarium infection and will help develop further action plans for preventing the spread of the disease.

For more information on the fusarium testing program visit **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca>**.

Contact: Shaffeek Ali
Pest Management Prevention Unit
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-4909

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

Fusarium testing program underway

Pay attention producers, Fusarium head blight (FHB) could soon be knocking at your door. The disease, which has had devastating effects in Manitoba, southeastern Saskatchewan and the mid-west U.S., has been seen moving westward. Canadian Grain Commission testing has shown that while still small, the detection frequency of *Fusarium graminearum*, a causal agent leading to FHB, has been increasing in Alberta.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is encouraging farmers to take action now against the threat of FHB. Through a new program, farmers can submit one-kilogram samples of wheat and barley to approved labs for *F. graminearum* testing with Alberta Agriculture picking up part of the cost.

Alberta Agriculture has committed $100,000 to the program to offset the cost of the tests for farmers. Three labs are participating in the program and will test samples for the presence of *F. graminearum*. The testing program is retroactive to March 5, 2001 and will run until June 30, 2001, depending on response. The lab test cost is $45 with $20 paid by the farmer and $25.00 paid by Alberta Agriculture.

"Any Alberta producer bringing in seed or grain should get a sample tested," says Bill Witbeck, provincial seed specialist with Alberta Agriculture in Lacombe. "The labs will be testing for the presence or absence of *F. graminearum*. Producers whose seed has been identified as infected will receive notice directly from the lab as well as an information package on how to handle the remainder of the infected seed. Only information on infection rates per municipality is being collected, individual results of each test remain confidential."

Livestock feeders are also encouraged to send in samples of their feed grain, especially if they have imported feed from areas with high FHB infection rates. The transportation of infected feed from outside the province may be one contributing factor to the introduction and further spread of *F. graminearum* in Alberta.

There are steps farmers can take to reduce their risk of FHB. Farmers should contact their local Agriculture Service Board or contact Alberta Agriculture for more information. Information can also be found on the Alberta Agriculture website at **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca>** and the Canadian Grain Commission website at **<www.cgc.ca>**.

Contact: Bill Witbeck
(403) 782-4641

Laboratories participating in the *Fusarium graminearum* testing program:

Agricore
4722 - 39 Street
Camrose, Alberta T4V 0Z5
(780) 672-5571 / 1-800-463-2045

BioVision Seed Research Ltd
9954 - 67 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T6E 0P5
(780) 436-8822/1-800-952-5407

20/20 Seed Labs Ltd.
Suite 201, 509 - 11 Avenue
Nisku, Alberta T9E 7N5
(780) 955-3435/1-877-420-2099

Rangeland management during drought

During drought, low soil moisture levels limit plant growth and cause reduced forage yields. Root growth is also limited, making range plants less able to reach scarce soil moisture. Carry-over is a portion of each year's plant growth that is left ungrazed. As carry-over breaks down it becomes litter, the dead plant material on the soil surface. Litter, insulates rangeland by keeping soil temperatures lower and reducing water loss. When moisture is scarce, rangelands with adequate litter reserves produce more forage than those with less litter.

During drought, grazing at normal stocking levels hasten litter breakdown, intensify drought effects and prolong range recovery. In essence, litter is the range manager's insurance policy. Drought management begins years before drought hits the landscape.

"This could be a distressing time for farmers and ranchers, given the extended dry conditions of the past years," says Barry Adams P.Ag., public lands division - southern region, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "We don't know what the future holds, but when drought hits, livestock producers face the painful dilemma of reducing stocking rates (grazing pressure) or damaging their rangeland. Excessively dry conditions call for specific management practices that can help reduce the impacts of drought on a livestock operation and the range resource and hasten recovery when the drought is over."

Cont'd on page 3

This drought checklist was first published in June of 1992. The checklist is an accumulation of management practices from the experience of many grazing lease holders in Southern Alberta and from other jurisdictions in North America, lessons that are worth reconsidering at times like this.

Drought effects on rangeland

- if grass growth has started, early grazing during drought will further stress range plants and leave them with lower energy reserves
- over a series of drought or dry years, heavily grazed ranges will show a shift in plant species to weedy, shallow-rooted, less productive species
- during drought conditions then, the goals for the manager are to minimize damage to the range and stay in business; heavy to moderate use of rangeland during drought reduces the production and profit potential for future years

Drought effects on livestock

Reduced forage yields during drought mean a declining plain of nutrition for cows and calves. This has significant adverse effects on livestock production, including the following:

- reduced gains due to increased energy expenditure while foraging,
- poor body condition in cows by fall and greater wintering costs,
- more open cows and late conception, which means fewer and smaller calves the subsequent year,
- a lighter calf crop during the year of drought, and
- disease problems like dust pneumonia.

"There are a variety of different options that have been practised by southern Alberta farmers and ranchers during drought conditions in the past decade," says Adams. 'Depending on individual circumstances, some are appropriate recommendations."

Native rangeland

- recognize the effect of drought on forage production,
- reduce stocking levels to balance livestock needs with the forage supply,
- allow light to moderate use of forage to enable plants to maintain their present level of vigour (plant health) and retain litter,
- rest or defer (delay) grazing in those fields that were heavily grazed in 1999 or 2000,
- graze first those fields rested or deferred in 1999,
- take advantage of grazing opportunities in rest, reserve or buffer fields,
- spread cattle distribution across more fields in those areas where rangelands are more sensitive to erosion (i.e. sand hills).

Cropland and tame pasture

- consider seeding annuals as an emergency forage source. In the spring, seed winter annuals for supplementary pasture. Spring-seeded fall rye and winter wheat remain vegetative throughout the summer and will respond with growth to any showers that occur
- use cattle to harvest light or failed hay and annual crops
- use last year's crested wheatgrass litter where present. Supplementation is usually required to compensate for the poor nutritional status of this forage
- make maximum safe use of current growth of seeded pastures (e.g., crested wheatgrass), which are better adapted to spring grazing than is native range
- make full use of stubble pastures after harvest

Water, salt, supplements and feed

- extend the feeding period
- place salt, emergency water supplies or supplements in areas that previously were lightly grazed
- use fields that will run out of water early, first. This will reduce grazing pressure on fields with better water supplies and spread cattle over more fields where water levels are low to avoid fouling low dams or dugouts with larger herds
- ensure that cattle have adequate salt. Some poisonous range plants are salt accumulators and are more palatable to livestock craving salt

"Once the drought has ended, range managers must give the rangeland a chance to recover, so grass production can return to normal and build to the highest level of range condition possible," says Adams. "Proper management after a drought has ended provides long-term benefits to a livestock operation and provides for a stable forage supply. Review your range management plan and the effect drought has had on range condition and vigour."

It is important to plan and implement a grazing system that builds plant vigour and re-establishes litter reserves. Moderate to light rates of stocking and deferral of spring grazing should definitely be considered.

Decide whether the adverse effects that grazing in spring might have, could be minimized by altering the period of use among fields (deferred rotation). A limited amount of marginal cropland could be seeded to tame pasture to provide complementary grazing for relief of spring grazing on native grassland. A grazing system, such as rest-rotation, could be implemented for badly depleted grasslands (this involves a full year of rest for certain fields to increase litter accumulation, improve plant vigour and hasten range recovery).

Cont'd on page 4

"Don't be hasty in regrassing deteriorated range. Recovery can be quite rapid with the right management," says Adams. "Rangeland in good to excellent condition provides the best protection against drought. This ensures the best possible mix of drought-adapted, deep-rooted and productive plant species that are naturally present on rangeland."

Good long-term management means managing for the dry years. This benefits the range, improves productivity, and provides a more stable, reliable forage supply.

Contact: Barry Adams
(403) 382-4299

Crop Protection 2001

The information needed to make the best decisions on insecticide, herbicide or other chemical treatment needs for crops is available in ***Crop Protection 2001***. The crop protection book is reviewed, updated and produced each year to give Alberta farmers the most current information on herbicides, insecticides, fungicides and rodenticides.

"Commonly known as the *Blue Book*, the publication is the most up-to-date guide of its kind," says Shaffeek Ali, acting leader, pest prevention and management unit with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's pest prevention and regulatory unit. "The 2001 issue is easy to use and includes new pesticide registrations, formulation changes, minor use registrations and a complete guide to safety, including protective clothing and first aid."

Details on the latest registered mixes and mix restrictions, application tips, expected results, storage and first aid precautions are included in the guide along with a listing of the weeds, diseases or pests controlled by each chemical.

Some of the features in ***Crop Protection 2001*** are:

- an updated listing of pesticide container disposal sites with contact names and telephone numbers
- chemical group numbers on the same page as the chemical providing quick reference for herbicide resistance management
- a chart on Group Classification by Modes of Action
- new pesticide registrations, new herbicide tank mixes and the new crop varieties for the new registrations

"As well as information on new chemicals, the latest registered mixes and expected results, the guide provides ideas, tips and directions for sprayer tank clean-out, chemical application, storage and first aid precautions," adds Ali. "Even though the guide includes more information each year, the cost has been kept down. It's still only $10, plus GST, a great value that helps farmers protect their investments by helping them choose the right way to treat their crops."

This publication is available at all Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development district offices or the Publications Office at 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. VISA and MasterCard orders can be placed by calling 1-800-292-5697. The shipping and handling cost per order is $2, plus GST.

"Identification, advance planning and proper use are important concepts in protecting crops," says Ali. "Arming yourself with up-to-date information is cost-effective and makes good sense."

Contact: Shaffeek Ali
(403)422-4909

Foot and Mouth outbreak in the U.K.

England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales are currently undergoing an uncontrolled Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak. FMD is an extremely contagious disease of cloven hoofed livestock (pigs, cattle, sheep, deer, etc). There is no treatment. Control involves slaughtering and burning large numbers of livestock, and stopping all movement of livestock, people and vehicles in the affected areas.

"The disease is easily transmitted between farms on clothing, footwear and vehicles, and can be transmitted in meat and dairy products," says Julia Keenliside DVM MSc, provincial swine veterinarian with Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The virus can survive several weeks to months in the environment."

The recent outbreak in the United Kingdom (U.K) has the potential to spread to other countries, including Canada. Once the disease enters a country, all exports of livestock products are halted for more than a year to prevent further spread.

"More than 60 per cent of the pork and beef produced in Canada is exported," adds Keenliside. "Loss of export markets would be economically devastating to Canada and particularly Alberta, where 75 per cent of Canada's cattle are produced. Given the volume of people traffic between the UK and Canada, the current outbreak poses a significant threat to our country."

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is currently recommending that people travelling to the U.K. do not visit a Canadian farm for at least two weeks on their return and dry clean all clothing and disinfect all footwear. In the U.K., efforts to limit people movement and halt the spread of the disease include cancelling soccer games, horse races, closing roads, closing national parks, limiting tourism and even cancelling the St. Patrick's day celebrations in Ireland.

Canadians touring in the U.K. can lessen the likelihood of bringing the virus back by avoiding travelling in rural areas, avoiding walking in rural areas, and not bringing any clothing or objects back that have contacted livestock or are made from livestock products (leather, wool, meat, milk).

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What is Food and Mouth Disease?

All livestock producers, livestock and meat industry workers and the general public should be aware of the following:

1 FMD is caused by one of the most infectious viruses known to man. It can be spread to healthy livestock by:
   a. meat or dairy products made from infected animals - the virus can survive for several months in certain products. Feeding garbage to swine is a common causes of outbreaks, particularly garbage from airports or ships;
   b. footwear, clothing or equipment contaminated with manure or body fluids from infected animals. The virus can survive for at least 24 hours on contaminated boots or clothing - longer than the time it takes to travel from the U.K. to Canada;
   c. through the air in aerosols from infected animals;
   d. direct contact with infected animals, or contact with premises recently occupied by infected animals;
   e. people who have contacted infected animals - the virus can survive for up to 30 hours in the human throat and can be carried in dirt on the skin or under fingernails.
2. FMD affects all cloven hoofed animals. This includes cattle, pigs, deer, elk, sheep, goats, llamas, wild boar and pot-bellied pigs. Horses, donkeys and mules are not affected but can carry the disease. Humans are rarely affected, and if they are, experience mild cold-like symptoms.
3. FMD causes blisters in and around the mouth and around the hooves of affected animals. While animals rarely die from the disease, they stop eating, are lame and very ill. Dairy cows stop producing milk. Meat animals stop growing and are not fit for slaughter.
4. FMD is extremely difficult to control once it occurs. The disease spreads very quickly within farms and between farms, often in a matter of hours. Control involves slaughtering large numbers of livestock, closing roads in affected areas, and stopping all sale and movement of livestock. Movement of people in infected areas is also stopped.
5. If FMD enters Canada, our export markets could be shut down for 18 months or more and cleanup could cost billions of dollars. Since over 50 per cent of the meat products produced in Canada are exported, the loss of export markets will cause substantial economic hardship for the livestock industry and its associated industries.
6. FMD currently exists in the UK, including England, Wales and Scotland. FMD is also found in several African countries, as well as in Asia and South America.

How to stop the spread of this disease

Everyone must take the following precautions to avoid introducing FMD into Canada:

1. Do not bring any meat or dairy products into Canada from the UK, or any other country, under any circumstances. Do not bring in any other livestock products eg: semen, embryos, hides. The FMD virus can survive for extended periods of time in meats, even cured or processed products. There is now increased vigilance at Canadian airports for these products, and they will be confiscated if found. The last outbreak of FMD in Canada was in Saskatchewan in 1952, and was brought in by contaminated meat.
2. All visitors to agri-food establishments (farms, feedlots, animal feed mills, slaughter or meat processing facilities) should be strictly controlled. Only allow visitors if necessary. Operators have the right to refuse entry to anyone if they are not comfortable that adequate precautions have been taken. Use a visitor log and require that all visitors sign in and list their previous livestock contacts.
3. Anyone travelling to the U.K. (or any other country with FMD) should avoid all contact with livestock, farm equipment on a livestock operation, animal feeds, slaughter plants for at least one week (seven days) and preferably two weeks after entering Canada.
4. Anyone that must visit an agri-food establishment within two weeks of travelling to the U.K. (or other country with FMD) must take appropriate sanitary precautions:
   a. footwear or clothing that has contacted livestock or been worn in visits to any agri-food establishment outside of Canada must not be brought back into the country. Visitors should be advised to purchase new footwear and clothing in Canada, or only use footwear and clothing that did not leave Canada.
   b. all other footwear must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and all other clothing laundered, preferably dry cleaned, before the visit;
   c. thoroughly showering or bathing, including cleaning under the fingernails;
   d. all equipment (even cameras) and personal effects that have been to another country must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected first - do not allow objects in that cannot be adequately disinfected;
   e. wearing disposable coveralls and disposable plastic boots, or clean cloth coveralls and boots supplied by the establishment.

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5. Pork or wild boar producers must not feed garbage or restaurant waste to swine, unless inspected and licensed to do so by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Garbage may contain imported meat made from infected animals, and is a common cause of outbreaks. Meat or dairy products from outside Canada must not be fed to pet pigs under any circumstances.
6. Livestock owners should immediately contact a veterinarian for the diagnosis of any new or suspicious disease problem in their stock, even if mild. FMD spreads very quickly and easily, so early diagnosis is critical for effective control.

Contact: Dr. Gerald Ollis
Provincial Veterinarian
Food Safety Division
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 427-6535

Dr. Julia Keenliside
Provincial Swine Veterinarian
Animal Industry Division
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 427-4614

Greenhouse production of bedding plants

The February 15, 2001 bedding plant workshop organized by the Greenhouse Resources Extension Assistance Team (G.R.E.A.T) and sponsored by the Alberta Greenhouse Association, attracted 55 new, beginners and advanced growers. At the workshop, practical information on how to grow quality bedding plants, especially when input costs have increased, was presented.

"The workshop participants are enthusiastic and are looking forward to another good year for bedding plants," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "Growing quality bedding plants requires several skills of plant management, a process that starts at seed germination. Providing proper temperature for germination is very critical. Growers were given information on seed germination requirements, role of light and transplanting practices."

During the workshop, Muhammad Younus, nutritional physiologist at CDCN, discussed nutrient management of bedding plants at different stages of plant development. Mirza then took the growers through a flow chart from seeding to sales.

"Multiple inputs at different stages can improve the quality of plants," adds Mirza. "For example, if plants are grown at cooler day temperatures in relation to night temperature, they will become dark green in color and will also be compact and will establish nicely later on in the garden."

Dr. Ken Fry, entomologist from Alberta Research Council Vegreville, outlined strategies to control insects on bedding plants using different cultural and biological methods. He recommended that growers establish a quarantine area in the greenhouse where plant material arriving off site can be kept and observed for the presence of insects such as whiteflies, thrips and aphids. In this way, growers can control the spread of these insects, ultimately reducing the use of insecticide.

Also, Dr. Kwesi, Ampong-Nyarko, entomologist at the CDCN, presented information on the use of registered insecticides and how to use them in a safe and effective manner.

"An important part of these workshops is the preparation of publications," says Mirza. "Four major handouts were used in the workshop: ***Bedding Plant Production Guidelines; Plant Nutrition and Fertilize Management; Manual of Insect Pest Management for Greenhouse Crops in Alberta;*** and, ***Chemical Methods to Control Insects in Bedding Plants***. These handouts are available by contacting Dr. Mirza at (780) 415-2303.

Contact: Mohyuddin Mirza
(780) 415-2303
<mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca>

Towards a market focus: Competing on resources

Creating strategies for successful farm businesses usually involves investing in specific production technology, targeting specific markets, or joining forces with others to gain one or more advantage. These advantages can include more efficient crop or livestock production, better use of machinery, or increased market access. But whether you select a strategy to go it alone or choose to enter into an alliance of some kind, it's important to understand what the farm's resources are and how they are used.

"An effective resource-based approach to creating strategy depends on understanding the relationships between resources, resource deployment and capabilities, and how this leads to creating sustainable competitive advantages and farm profitability," says Paul Gervais, management specialist for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, at the Agriculture Business Management Branch in Olds.

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Identifying and assessing a farm's or agribusiness' resources provides three major benefits:

- It provides a framework for creating, assessing, and revising strategy.
- It identifies resource gaps and possible shortcomings.
- It helps put your resources in perspective of others.

"At first blush, identifying resources appears straightforward," adds Gervais. "Financial or physical resources have traditionally been seen as assets on a balance sheet. Cash, land, machinery, most of the technology around the farm and other forms of capital are relatively easy to identify. Genetics, patents, trademarks, copyrights, and processes such as feeding schedules or specialized ration formulations are a little harder to evaluate, but values for these can be determined or estimated."

The most difficult resources to evaluate are those that are difficult to assess in terms of dollars and cents. Such resources include reputation, organizational capability, ability to network, contacts, goodwill, and the ease in which the business can navigate through sector, industry, or cross-industry clusters. In addition, these types of resources are often transferable, so they can be used in different types of enterprises. Transferable resources are more valuable than fixed, hard assets.

"Difficulties in assessing non-fungible resources can pose problems in terms of determining issues of control and contribution levels when forming an alliance or pooling resources in a joint venture," says Gervais. "Identifying these types of resources can help determine how power and profits (or losses) are negotiated among participants."

While such resources are difficult to identify and evaluate, they can sometimes make the difference between outstanding business success and failure. Resources that are unique or difficult for others to copy give the farm business a more sustainable competitive advantage. This is important, because long-term strategies always fail when based on resources that offer only short-term advantages, or when based on resources that are easily copied by competitors. Creating strategy based on a sustainable competitive advantage is dependent upon identifying unique, durable and transferable resources, while carefully selecting resources for replenishment or upgrading to uphold these advantages over time.

For more information, contact the local Alberta Agriculture district office or contact Gervais directly at (403) 556-4250, **<paul.gervais@gov.ab.ca>**.

This is article five of a 10-part series on ***Moving Towards a Market Focus***. Previous articles in the series are available on the Alberta Agriculture website at: **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>**

Contact: *Paul Gervais*
(403) 556-4250

North American farm direct marketing

Things are changing on farms around the world. Farm families are embracing new ways to use their land and resources and are implementing new methods to market their products. In January 2001, the North American Farm Direct Marketing conference attracted 1,400 people. Agriculture staff, municipal representatives, and farmers' market managers from around the world were there to beg, borrow and steal ideas to help the growing industries 'back home'.

"The conference/tour was one of the best," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock. "The conference and the participants were exciting, positive, upbeat, and shared a host of ideas and enthusiasm for the farm direct marketing industry in Alberta."

The conference focused on farms that sell products directly to the consumer through a variety of methods, everything from farm stores to school tours to festivals. Some of the marketing tips shared at the conference include:

- don't be afraid to charge admission for farm activities;
- give people good value for their money;
- look for opportunities in schools. Growth in agriculture-education, *Edu-tainment* (education that is entertaining) is evident by the number of farms establishing school tour programs. Farms are charging $4 to $6 per child and getting thousands of children a year visiting their farms;
- tap into the business client. Farms offering retreats and corporate parties offer team building opportunities. Elaborate mazes, barbeques and informal "farm" facilities provide the backdrop for this type of venture;
- farm stores, farm stands and high-end gift shops are being incorporated into farm direct marketing operations to extend the season and 'destination' possibilities, to increase cash flow and to reduce risk;
- festivals, in particular *Pumpkin Festivals*, are huge. There are two huge Halloween trade shows in the US each year, one in Chicago, the other in April in Las Vegas. Many of these farm direct operations take in the Halloween trade show as well to help them make the most of this very popular and money making festival; and,
- if a location isn't great and even if it is, keeping customers on the farm longer is a major concern. Creating a destination and adding value to your customers experience is key. People are doing everything to help create a destination out of their farms: playgrounds (offering farm toys kids can't find in the city), pig races, goat races, slides, enchanted forests, scarecrow making, farm meals, on-farm bakeries, nature walks, animal patches, picnic areas,

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Christmas themes, mazes, Easter egg and bunny hunts, Halloween fun houses, inflatable caterpillars, music, face painting, bringing in craft or auto shows, antiques, scavenger hunts.

"More information on successful ways to attract customers to the farm is being made available all the time," adds Engel.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

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Agri-News Briefs

Central Alberta farm family wins soil conservation award

The Alberta Conservation Tillage Society (ACTS) presented its annual Farm Family Conservation Award at the FarmTech Conference in Red Deer on January 31, 2001. This year's winner was Harvey and Coby Brink of H&C Sprucelane Farms in Bentley. Brink has been zero tilling his farm for seven years. The Brinks were recognized for their on-going commitment to soil conservation in an area that is not traditionally considered to be suited for direct seeding. By direct seeding, they have significantly reduced the hours they put on their tractor. Through diverse crop rotations, fertility and weed management, and better water use the Brink's have seen their yields increase with reduced tillage. With the elimination of fall and spring tillage, they have realized substantial labour savings on this operation. This has allowed them to diversify the operation, adding a feedlot to further diversify the hog and grain operation. Harvey Brink is a founding member and current president of the Rainy Creek Soil Conservation Club. The club is hosting their 6th Annual Direct Seeding Workshop in Lacombe on March 21, 2001. Topics include crop rotations, soil fertility, weed management and manure management in a reduced tillage system. The keynote speaker is Brent VanKoughnet, who writes for *Top Crop Manager* magazine. VanKoughnet will discuss taking a farm CEO approach to management. To register, call Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe, at (403) 782-3301.

18 tag options approved for use in CCIP

The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) has approved 18 tag options for use in the Canadian Cattle Identification Program (CCIP). The tags have been tested under trial conditions and have met the Program's criteria for retention, readability and ability to withstand tampering. Sixteen bar code and two electronic tags are currently accepted into the program. Approved bar code tags are:

- Allflex Junior (2 1/4" X 2 1/4" plastic dangle tag)
- Allflex Large (3" X 2 1/4" plastic dangle tag)
- Allflex Maxi (3 3/4" X 3" plastic dangle tag)
- CAN-TAG Dalesman Large Tag (2.75" X 2.25" plastic dangle tag)
- Dakota Brand Medium Tag (3.25" X 2.25" plastic dangle tag)
- Duflex Medium (1 7/8" X 1 3/4" plastic dangle tag)
- Duflex Large (2 3/4" X 2 1/4" plastic dangle tag)
- Duflex Extra Large Tag (4.25" X 3" plastic dangle tag)
- Leader Large Tag (2.75" X 2.25" plastic dangle tag)
- Leader Extra Large Tag (4.25" X 3" plastic dangle tag)
- Reyflex Small (2 1/4" X 2 1/4" plastic dangle tag)
- Reyflex Large (3" X 2 1/2" plastic dangle tag)
- Reyflex Extra Large Tag (3.75" X 3" plastic dangle tag)
- Zee Tags Medium (2 1/4" X 1 3/4" plastic dangle tag)
- Zee Tags Large (3 1/4" X 2 1/2" plastic dangle tag)
- Zee Tags Extra Large (4" X 2 3/4" plastic dangle tag)
- The two approved electronic tags are:
- Allflex (button tag)
- Destron Fearing e.tag (button tag)

CCIA-approved tags bear the trademark half maple leaf with letters CA, a visual 9-digit individual ID number, and either a bar-code or electronic chip for automatic reading. There are currently six approved colours (white, yellow, light pink, dark pink, beige, light green). Not all tags are available in all colours. Tags are available through retailers of farm supplies, veterinarians and other industry organizations. Further information about tags and supplier contact names and numbers are available on the CCIP website **<www.cattle.ca/ccia>**. Contact Cindy McCreath, communications manager, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (403) 275-8558, **<mccreathc@cattle.ca>** for further information about CCIP.

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Agri-News

March 26, 2001

Can Alberta farmers cut back on fertilizer this spring?

As a result of rising energy costs, farmers across the prairies are facing significantly increased fertilizer prices this spring, particularly nitrogen (N) fertilizer. The questions many farmers minds are asking are: how much fertilizer can they afford this year? and can fertilizer be cut back this spring?

"In southern Alberta, soil moisture conditions are very dry soil over much of the region," says Ross H. McKenzie, research scientist – soil fertility and crop nutrition with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "In the summer and fall of 2000, rainfall in southern Alberta was well below normal, resulting in below normal crop yields. This means that plant nutrient removal from soil was also well below normal and nutrient carry over levels in soil are higher than normal. With the rising cost of fertilizer, below normal soil moisture conditions and higher than normal nutrient levels in soil, dryland farmers in southern Alberta may be able to cut back on nitrogen fertilizer."

The starting point to determine how much fertilizer is needed is to soil sample fields as early as possible in the spring to determine plant available nutrients and observe soil moisture conditions in each field. Soil samples should be taken at the 0-6, 6-12 and 12-24 inch (0-15,15-30 and 30-60 cm) depths for nutrient levels. Deeper samples should be taken to determine subsoil moisture to 36 inches (90 cm).

Once soil analysis is complete, farmers can work with their fertilizer dealer, industry agronomist or Alberta Agriculture crop specialist to evaluate both soil nutrient and soil moisture levels. After looking at stored soil moisture and average growing season precipitation, probable target crop yields can be estimated. For example, if a field with a clay loam texture has 12 inches of very moist soil, then there is about two inches of stored soil water. If the average growing season precipitation is seven inches, then use nine inches to estimate a target yield. If spring wheat is the crop to be grown, it takes at least four inches of water to get the crop through vegetative growth and each inch of water after that will increase yield by five to six bushels per acre. In such a case, fertilizing for a target yield of 25 bu/ac would be reasonable. The higher the estimated target yield selected, the greater the level of risk to achieve the target yield. Therefore, going into a drier than

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This Week

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normal spring, farmers may want to be cautious in selection of their target yields to reduce the level of risk. To determine the economically optimum rate of N fertilizer, farmers need to know the cost of N fertilizer and need to estimate the approximate value of each crop at harvest.

"After a soil analysis has been completed, the economic analysis can begin," says McKenzie. "Alberta Agriculture's Agronomy Unit has developed fertilizer response charts for a number of crops for each of the major soil and climatic zones in Alberta. Crop response to N fertilizer charts include crop yield increase with increasing rates of N fertilizer over a range of soil N levels in each soil zone. Farmers can access this information and determine economic rates of N fertilizer from a computer program called Alberta Farm Fertilizer Information Recommendation Manager (AFFIRM). The AFFIRM program also has fertilizer response information for a number of irrigated crops at three irrigation levels, from supplemental to optimum."

The AFFIRM program can be downloaded from Alberta Agriculture's web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>. To use the program, select the soil zone in question, input the soil test levels, the soil moisture level, the crop to be grown, the cost of N fertilizer and the expected value for the crop. The program will then develop charts from this information. Each value that is inputted can be changed to develop various scenarios, to fine tune and plan fertilizer rates.

"It's important to note that expected yields are theoretical estimates from a number of years of research," adds McKenzie. "Rather than base the economic analysis on the expected yield, it is best to use the increments of yield increase. For example, when N fertilizer cost is $0.42/lb and wheat is valued at $4.00/bu, a point of diminished returns is reached at an application rate of 30 lb N/ac. In these examples the economic rate is selected at a 2:1 ratio, which means that the last dollar spent on fertilizer returns two dollars of increased yield.

"Examples posted on the Alberta Agriculture website demonstrate the importance of determining soil N level and soil moisture conditions before seeding. By knowing the cost of N fertilizer and estimating crop value, farmers can determine how much fertilizer is economic. This is the best way to make fertilizer decisions for the coming spring. The AFFIRM program can also be used to determine if and when other nutrients such as phosphorus, potassium or sulfur may be required."

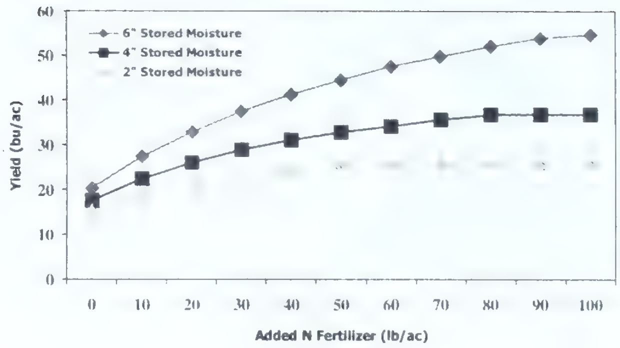

Figure 1. Spring wheat yield increase to added nitrogen fertilizer, at three soil moisture levels (2, 4 and 6 inches) in the Dark Brown soil zone with average growing season precipitation, when soil test nitrogen level is 20 lb/ac.

Table 1. Economic returns of N fertilizer for spring wheat in the Dark Brown soil zone with 2 inches (50 mm) of stored soil water, average growing season precipitation and a soil N level of 20 lb/ac in the 0 to 24 inch (60 cm) depth. Note: point of diminished returns (bold in the table) is reached at 30 lb/ac fertilizer application.

N Fertilizer Rate (lb/ac):	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80
Expected Yield (bu/ac):	15.3	18.9	21.4	23.3	24.7	25.9	25.9	25.9	25.9
Yield Increase (bu/ac):		3.6	2.5	1.9	1.4	1.2	0	0	0

Scenario #1

N Fertilizer Cost: $0 .42/lb for 10 lb		4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.2
Wheat Value at $4.00/bu		14.4	10.00	**7.60**	5.60	4.80	0	0	0

Table 2. Economic returns of N fertilizer for spring wheat in Dark Brown soil zone with 6 inches (150 mm) of stored soil water, average growing season precipitation and a soil N level of 20 lb/ac in the 0 to 24 inch (60 cm) depth. Note: point of diminished returns (bold in the table) is reached at 80 lb/ac fertilizer application.

N Fertilizer Rate (lb/ac):	0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	8
Expected Yield (bu/ac):	20.7	27.3	32.9	37.5	41.3	44.6	47.5	49.9	5
Yield Increase (bu/ac):		6.6	5.6	4.6	3.8	3.3	2.9	2.4	

Scenario #2

N Fertilizer Cost: $0 .42/lb for 10 lb		4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4
Wheat Value at $4.00/bu		26.4	22.40	18.40	15.2	13.2	11.6	9.60	8

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For further information on determining fertilizer requirements, farmers should contact their nearest soil testing lab, agronomist, fertilizer dealer or Alberta Agriculture crop specialist.

Contact: *Ross H. McKenzie*
(403) 381-5842

2000-01 winter, one of Alberta's driest so far

Cold and dry winter weather returned to Alberta in February after an unseasonably warm January. Much below normal temperatures and precipitation totals were reported in the province in February.

"The provincial total precipitation average of 8.2 mm was 9.1 mm below the 1961-1990 long-term normal of 17.3 mm," says Shane Chetner, agricultural air issues specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "February flurries along the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains and in the Southern region helped bring precipitation total to below normal, while the remainder of the province continued with much below normal precipitation totals. February is typically the driest month and the third coldest month compared with the rest of the year."

February began with several days of well above normal temperatures, daily maximum temperatures reaching between plus five to ten degrees Celsius. In the second week of February, temperatures dropped to well below normal. Temperatures around the province recovered to near normal for the remainder of the month.

The provincial average temperature of -12.4 degrees C. was 3.0 degrees below the 1961 to 1990 provincial normal of -9.4 degree C.

"Cardston, 40 km west of Waterton National Park, reported the greatest temperature departure 8.4 degrees below the February 1961-1990 monthly normal of -4.1 degrees C," adds Chetner. "The greatest precipitation departure was recorded at Camrose, where only 0.2 mm of precipitation was reported, 19.5 mm below the 1961 to 1990 normal."

The winter precipitation in Alberta from November 1, 2000 to February 28, 2001 was 30 to 60 per cent of normal (16 to 50 mm). The provincial average precipitation total was 32.1 mm, 43 per cent of the normal of 74.4 mm. The start of March signals the last month of typically cooler drier weather and the lead into spring.

"Spring is typically marked by an increase in precipitation, and is the time of greatest soil moisture recharge and an increased chance of the recovering from the dry winter," says Chetner. "If the province receives 137.7 mm, or about 44 per cent above the long-term normal of 95.4 mm of precipitation during the period of March 1 to May 31, precipitation levels would be returned to the 1961-1990 normals. Timely province-wide spring snowstorms will improve soil moisture reserves. Spring snowstorms have improved regional moisture conditions substantially in past years. Province-wide spring snowstorms would be needed to improve moisture conditions prior to seeding."

Current predictions from Environment Canada are for above normal precipitation for the March to May period in southern Alberta.

The provincial averages are based on data recorded at 54 Environment Canada climate stations across Alberta.

More Alberta weather information is available on the Alberta Agriculture website at <**http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca** >.

Contact: *Shane Chetner*
(780) 427-3615

Members elected to Dairy Board and Policy Committee

The province's dairy industry has taken the next step towards an independent, democratically elected structure. As part of the dairy election process in the ***Thurber Report***, Agricultural Products Marketing Council has completed the process that allowed dairy producers to elect delegates and delegates to elect interim Dairy Board and interim Policy Committee members. As well, the Alberta processors have elected their representatives to the Dairy Board and Policy Committee.

"On March 13, 2001, the 36 recently elected producer delegates met to select their choice for two producer Dairy Board members and five producer members for the Policy Committee," says Yvonne Grabowsky, project leader with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "The two members elected to the Board are Bill Feenstra of Didsbury and Lenard Crozier of St. Albert. As recommended by the Thurber Report on the governance of the dairy industry, the interim board will consist of an equal number of processor representatives. The two processor representatives are Yves Leroux, (Parmalat Canada) and Bill McLeod, (Dairyland Fluid Division Ltd., Suputo). These people need to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council."

The five producers elected to the Policy Committee are Bruce Beattie (Sundre), Lorrie Jespersen (Barrhead), Aart Okkema (Vermilion), Rients Palsma (Ponoka) and Bill Van Rootselaar (Ft. Macleod). The five processor representatives are Anthony Oetelaar (Sunnyrose Cheese, a division of Agropur), Brian Miller (Lucerne Foods), David Etherington (Nestle Canada), Barry Northfield (Foothills Creamery), and Gary Reid

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(Armstrong Cheese/Saputo). Brian Rhiness, Assistant Deputy Minister of Alberta Agriculture, in his capacity as the interim Chair of the Dairy Board, appointed the Policy Committee members.

"The Board and the Policy Committee are now in place to govern as well as to begin the task of defining the future governance of the industry," adds Rhiness. "The Board and the Policy Committee has a clean sheet of paper when it comes to designing the future governance structure of the dairy industry. The only limitation to their task is that any decisions have to be within the parameters of the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act*."

The 36 elected producer delegates continue to have a role to play. The delegates will receive and be requested to review and provide feedback on the governance and operational plans as they are drafted. Delegates are also expected to seek input from other dairy producers and industry. All producers have a role to play in keeping informed and providing comments and feedback throughout the process.

The elected Board and Policy Committee members begin work on March 29, 2001. A working draft of the structure and Plan regulation will be reviewed by all producer delegates and processors in June, 2001. Their feedback will help refine the Plan regulation in preparation for industry and stakeholder consultations in early fall. Input from these consultations will be incorporated into the Plan regulation draft in November 2001. Amendments, if required, to any of the Acts will be prepared for the spring sitting of the legislature in 2002. The target is to be ready for an industry vote on the Plan regulation in March or April 2002. The implementation of the new industry governance will follow the completion of the vote.

Throughout the transition, the dairy industry will continue to operate under the existing *Dairy Board Act and Regulation*. Dairy producers will not see a reduction in service.

Contact: *Yvonne Grabowsky*
(780) 361-1231

Malfunctioning unit heaters can lead to bedding plant problems

Ethylene gas produced by the incomplete combustion of natural gas in unit heaters used by greenhouse crop growers can damage bedding plants.

"Many growers are sealing their greenhouses very tightly in an effort to save energy," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist, Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "Sealing the fresh air intake, which supplies fresh air to these furnaces, however, can cause problems. Natural gas heaters need proper ventilation and intake of fresh air from outside."

Ethylene ($C2H4$) is an odourless, colourless gas which acts as a plant hormone. Most of the bedding plants are susceptible to ethylene injury at levels from 0.01 to 1.00 ppm. No other air pollutant causes a wider range of symptoms than ethylene gas. These symptoms range from malformed, mis-shaped leaves, thickened stems, leaf and flower abortion, stunted growth and epinasty (drooping leaves).

The effect on bedding plants varies with species, growth stage, length of exposure, temperature and the concentration of ethylene gas. "Growers should watch for any abnormality in the plant growth," adds Mirza.

Tomatoes seedlings are highly sensitive to damage by ethylene and tomato plants are good indicator plants. Many bedding plant growers start tomato plants a little later in the season, so it is a good idea to have some handy for this purpose. The very first symptoms on tomato seedlings will appear as twisting of leaves or leaves bunching together. The leaves may become very dark green and thickened. Flower abortion is also common on tomatoes due to damage by ethylene gas."

Furnace placement can be critical to proper ventilation. Some greenhouses have the natural gas furnaces located in the middle of the greenhouse and there is no provision of fresh air supply for them. This can be a source of a major disaster. It is recommended to have one square inch of vent cross section for every 2500 BTU's heater output. Mirza adds, "Many growers use laundry dryer vent hose as a fresh air intake. When located fairly close to the furnace burners it works well. Growers should also have their unit heaters serviced on a regular basis. Look at the flame, if it appears to be orange in color, then it is time to take action."

If greenhouse plants are showing any unusual twisting or malformation, contact the extension staff at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre North immediately (780) 422-1789.

Contact: *Mohyuddin Mirza*
(780) 415-2303
<mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca>

Winter wheat shows improvement

Winter Wheat production in the prairie parkland is becoming a good-news story. Winter wheat crops grown north of Brooks have previously had problems with winter survival, maturity and quality. However, in the past decade, a leading-edge breeding program at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) has released highly adaptable cultivars that are now providing new and substantial improvements to winter wheat production for western Canada and the Great Plains area of the U.S.

"A report from the U of S crop development centre (CDC), entitled *Recent Improvements in Winter Wheat Production Potential*, points out some remarkable statistics," says Ron

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Heller, agronomist with Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Vermilion. "The report indicates yield increases up to 100 per cent, from 30 to 60 bushels per acre, in some cases. These newer varieties of winter wheat are providing farmers in high winter-stress regions with crop options in the same range as adapted spring wheats."

Some examples are:

- **CDC Harrier**, a winter-hardy semi-dwarf with excellent straw strength and higher grain yield than previously available varieties
- **CDC Falcon**, reportedly matures seven to 10 days earlier than other registered cultivars, especially in cool/wet and late seasons
- **CDC Raptor**, demonstrates stem and leaf rust resistance superior to all other varieties adapted for western Canada
- **CDC Ptarmigan** is a short-strawed soft white winter wheat that represents a new quality wheat class (CWB Identity Preserved production system – 3 year interim registration).

"The CDC report gives some agronomic points applicable to these varieties that are very noteworthy," adds Heller. "Their shorter, stronger straw allows for the use of higher nitrogen fertilizer rates to achieve both a much higher grain protein concentration and greatly increased grain yield. Most older varieties of winter wheat (like Norstar) were subject to significant lodging under high moisture and fertility, limiting the grain yield potential and compromising the grain quality due to harvest problems. *CDC Kestrel*, released in 1991, was the first semi-dwarf variety for western Canada (since 1912) with acceptable winter hardiness. The report states this variety essentially eliminated the lodging problem and became key to establishing the true potential of properly managed winter wheat. *CDC Clair* and *CDC Osprey* followed in 1995, and quickly became the choice of growers in higher moisture areas outside the traditional winter wheat production zone of southern Alberta. Their agronomic performance is similar to *Kestrel*, but both show traits for higher grain protein concentration."

When combined with no-till seeding methods, winter wheat crops provide the most environmentally friendly cropping option available in the Canadian prairies due to their erosion control, reduced pesticide requirements, more efficient crop moisture use, reduced summerfallow, lower energy costs with less tillage, and higher productivity. The author of the report, Dr. Brian Fowler, has been instrumental in publishing a ***Winter Wheat Production Manual*** that promotes direct-seeding as the system of choice for growing winter wheat.

When using reduced tillage methods and growing winter wheat, growers have been very successful in achieving higher-than-the-average-expected results with winter wheat instead of HRS wheat, and even CPS varieties (a typically higher-yielding wheat for this area). Sixty and 70 bushels per acre is common, and there is realistic enthusiasm for an *80 Bushel Grower Club*. The critical management item appears to be a low-disturbance, direct-seeding operation where the previous crop stubble remains standing for maximum snow catch; a precision-placed fertility package is optimized; and early spring moisture is exploited. There are, of course, other benefits to reducing tillage, but agronomically for winter wheat, fall direct-seeding enhances winter hardiness, improves fertilizer efficiency and provides a different approach to controlling weeds, disease, and other crop pests.

"Winter wheat should also be of particular interest to farmers in northern Alberta because it avoids most of the problems (associated) with Fusarium Head Blight, Orange Blossom Wheat Midge, herbicide resistant weeds, and spring seeding delays," continues Heller. "Costs for fall seeding are the same as spring time, but may offer an opportunity to offset potential challenges of spring cereal crop production. Many growers are able to skip a wild oat herbicide treatment in winter wheat."

Growing winter wheat is something worth taking a closer look at. Combined with a reduced tillage management package, growing winter wheat in northern Alberta now seems to be a valid crop choice. As the referenced report suggests, the improvements shown are significantly more than just small incremental changes seen in other crop classes. These are major agronomic improvements that farmers need to know about.

Free copies of the full report are available upon request, by contacting Heller at (780) 853-8262. Heller can also provide updated versions of the ***Winter Wheat Production Manual***.

There are numerous growers willing to chat about their experience and promote winter wheat as a viable option. Early planning is the first step, because what is seeded this spring will determine the opportunity," says Heller.

Contact: *Ron Heller*
(780) 853-8262

A salute to 4-H volunteers!

The United Nations declared 2001 as the ***Year of Volunteers***. It is very fitting that this opportunity is taken to salute all the dedicated people who volunteer their time in support of Alberta 4-H.

"To start with, there are 3,000 adult leaders. These dedicated people certainly have an impact on the lives of both the youth entrusted to their care and to Alberta communities," says Mahlon Weir, head of 4-H Branch with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Much information and many accolades come to the 4-H branch as testimonial

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statements from 4-H members present and past, parents, and representatives of community, government and corporate organizations. Their feedback is very clear – there would not be a 4-H program without the volunteers."

The data estimating how much time volunteer leaders dedicate to 4-H in Alberta and roughly how much of an economic contribution that represents, is very interesting. It shows that each leader devotes, on average, about four hours per week to 4-H. Using a value factor of $12 per hour (Statistics Canada) this represents an annual donation of more than $7 million worth of time to the development and delivery of 4-H at the community level.

Currently, Alberta has the largest number of registered 4-H leaders of any province in Canada. Almost 30 per cent of Canada's 10,456 leaders are associated with Alberta's 456 4-H clubs.

"But it doesn't stop with registered 4-H leaders," adds Weir. "There are many others who dedicate their time to help with club activities and other 4-H events, all done in the spirit of helping others."

In Canada today, there are over 7.5 million volunteers helping 175,000 not-for-profit organizations. Their personal stories are told on a special website <**www.aivcanada.org**>. This site is designed to keep the public up to date with what individuals and groups are doing to recognize volunteers throughout 2001.

"I challenge 4-H groups to capitalize on the United Nation's theme this year," says Weir. "Take the time to thank all those who dedicate their most valuable resources - their time."

Contact: Mahlon Weir
(780) 427-4463

Create country memories with farm direct attractions

Creating Country Memories is the mission of Eckert's Farms in Illinois. The Eckert's have been entertaining families on their farms for years and recently spoke at the North American Farm Direct Marketing Conference (NAFSMC) about creating attractions on the farm.

"Eckert's Farms has been family owned and operated since 1837 by six generations of Eckerts. Starting as a simple roadside stand in 1920, today Eckert's farms are located in Belleville, Grafton and Millstadt, Illinois," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock. "They have grown from simple fruit orchards into family entertainment centres that feature special children's activities, annual events, festivals and the Eckert's Country Store and Restaurant."

The Eckert's run a variety of special events from strawberry and Christmas festivals to company picnics, they understand how to make an farm attraction an experience. They shared the following information with fellow farm direct marketers at NAFDMC.

Three *goals* to address when developing an attraction include:

- **Create a memory.** You want people to return and you want them to tell other people about your business.
- **Encourage visitors to stay longer.** The longer they stay, the more they buy and the more memories they make.
- **Increase "gate" sales.** You do this by providing a perceived value greater than or equal to the admission price paid.

Successful farm direct marketers agree that to be successful, make the attraction an experience. This is done by appealing to the customers' senses. Surprise them, make them laugh, scare/thrill them and get them involved in the farm experience.

"The target audience must be considered," says Engel. "Determine whether the attraction is being designing for kids, adults or both. Kids' attractions need to stimulate children and are basically passive for adults. Provide comfortable seating for adults who will be watching the kids, a concession to quench thirst and stave off hunger, and view scapes or photo opportunities. Examples include: pedal tractors, climbing structures, inflatable jumpers, costumed characters, sandbox, straw pile, mini-golf, or face painting."

Attractions for kids, parents and grandparents need to stimulate all targeted markets. They tend to be more expensive and demanding, require an admission price and need to create memories for parents and grandparents.

"When incorporating farm attractions into a farm direct operation, remember to consider the cost and returns," says Engel. "Do the math and figure out how many admissions are needed to pay for the attraction and which attractions will give you the greatest impact? Safety and liability issues need to be a part of the planning process as well."

For ideas and resource on developing farms direct marketing, take time to visit other farms, visit the Eckert's web site, go to <**www.eckerts.com**>, check out other farm direct marketing websites, join organization like the NFDMA, and call one of Alberta Agriculture's rural development specialists – business:

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Kerry Engel	Westlock	(780) 349-4465
vacant	Claresholm	(403) 625-1445
Lisa Houle	Red Deer	(403) 340-5369
Sharon Homeniuk	Stony Plain	(780) 963-6101
Tim Keating	Falher	(780) 837-2211
Slav Heller	St. Paul	(780) 645-6301
Kathy Lowther and Donna Fleury	Airdrie	(403) 948-8537
Janice McGregor	Morinville	(780) 939-4351
Leona Reynolds-Zayak	Vermilion	(780) 853-8101
Linda Hawk	Medicine Hat	(403) 529-3616
Lynn Stegman	Red Deer	(403) 340-7010
Jan Warren	Vulcan	(780) 485-5116
Marian Williams	Camrose	(780) 679-1210

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4465

Agri-News Briefs

CWRA conference

The Canadian Water Resources Association (CWRA) is holding the annual Alberta branch conference on April 8 to 10, 2001 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. The conference presents information on the issues facing water users and water managers in Alberta. If affords attendees the opportunity to meet with users representing all sectors of water consumption and regulators administering the current legislation. Priority issues facing water users and managers will be identified over the conference days, giving attendees the chance to contribute directly to the development of Alberta's Framework for Water Management Planning, a requirement under the Water Act. Water is a valued resource and this conference provides a forum for the exchange of information and opinion relating to the management of Canada's water resources. Registration begins at 6:00 p.m. on April 8. For further information, contact Robert Harrison with Alberta Environment's Water Management Division, (780) 427-9288. Alberta government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialling 310-0000 and then the number.

Alpaca Show

Discover the world of Alpacas at the 5th annual Riviere Qui Barre Alpaca Show on April 7, 2001 at the Riviere Qui Barre Arena. The event starts at 9:00 a.m. with a fleece competition and a private consignor's silent auction. Show Judging commences at 10:30 a.m. The Show also features a fashion show, alpaca booths and display booths. 4-H members, youth groups and families are encouraged to attend and experience the novice showmanship class, no handling experience or Alpacas are necessary, but pre-registration is required. For further information, contact Brian Carpenter at (780) 470-0641.

Central Alberta farm family wins soil conservation award

The Alberta Conservation Tillage Society (ACTS) presented its annual Farm Family Conservation Award at the FarmTech Conference in Red Deer on January 31, 2001. The 2001 winner was Harvey and Coby Brink of H&C Sprucelane Farms in Bentley. Harvey has been zero tilling for seven years on his farm. The Brinks were recognized for their on-going commitment to soil conservation in an area that is not traditionally considered to be suited for direct seeding. By direct seeding, they have been able to significantly reduce the hours they put on their tractor and the amount of fuel they burn. Through diverse crop rotations, fertility and weed management, and better water use the Brinks have seen their yields increase with reduced tillage. With the elimination of fall and spring tillage, they have also realized substantial labour savings. This has allowed them to add a feedlot to further diversify their hog and grain operation. Harvey also custom direct seeds for a number of farmers in the Bentley area. Harvey is a founding member and current president of the Rainy Creek Soil Conservation Club. He credits much of his success to the knowledge gained and information exchanged with the other club members at monthly meetings, annual workshops and summer tours. For further information, contact Rick Taillieu, agronomist with Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Olds, (403) 556-8235.

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Agri-News

April 2, 2001

New Minister no stranger to agriculture

Shirley McClellan was appointed Deputy Premier, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Vice-Chair of the Agenda and Priorities Committee, on March 19, 2001.

As Deputy Premier, McClellan is also charged with the responsibility of representing rural interests at the Cabinet table. As a farmer, McClellan arrives at her post with a deep understanding of rural issues and is already familiar with the agriculture portfolio, serving as Associate Minister between 1989 and 1992.

"My constituency is largely rural and agriculture is a very important industry," she says. "I've been involved in farming a long time, so I can understand the pressures producers are under. The government will continue to help producers stay competitive and is committed to listening to and working with farmers to shape a healthy future for agriculture in Alberta."

McClellan says her priority as Minister will be working to ensure the sustainability of agriculture in the province. "Agriculture is a vital part of Alberta's economy and way of life. The role of the government should be to allow the industry to grow on its own and to remove the barriers that can stop that growth from happening," McClellan says.

"The agriculture industry will be facing some major challenges in the future, but will also be presented with great opportunities," adds McClellan. "Farmers are entrepreneurial by nature and have never been afraid of diversity. Both the primary and value-added sectors offer wonderful opportunities for growth. Our job is to make sure that producers can take full advantage of those opportunities."

McClellan has never shied away from a challenge. During her tenure as Minister of Health, she led the most significant restructuring of the health system in the province's history. Almost 200 health care boards were restructured into 17 regional health boards and two provincial boards.

As the longest-serving cabinet minister in the provincial government, McClellan brings a wealth of experience to her new post. A member of the Alberta Legislature since November 1987, she has previously held cabinet postings in International and Intergovernmental Relations, Health, and Community Development.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

McClellan was born in Hanna and attended school in Cereal and Red Deer. She currently farms in New Brigden with her husband, Lloyd, and son, Mick. Her daughter, Tami, is a schoolteacher.

Contact: Maureen Osadchuk – Executive assistant
(780) 427-2137

Is herbicide carryover a concern?

The southern Alberta drought of 2000 may have affected herbicide breakdown and could result in herbicide carryover this spring. Carryover is dependent on several variables including: soil organic matter content, soil pH, and rates applied.

"Many herbicides are decomposed by soil microorganisms which require adequate moisture and temperature conditions to perform their normal functions," says Gayle Luca, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vulcan. "Environmental conditions such as drought inhibits normal microbial activity reducing herbicide breakdown. Dry soil moisture conditions can result in increased herbicide absorption to soil particles reducing herbicide degradation. These factors can contribute to herbicide carryover and impact sensitive crops in 2001."

Due to the increased risk of carryover for the upcoming crop season, producers should check the labels of the herbicides used last year against the crops they expect to seed this year. Of the herbicides used in southern Alberta, **Edge** (ethalfluralin), **Treflan** (trifluralin), **Odyssey** (imazamox + imazethapyr) and **Pursuit** (imazethapyr) are at higher risk for carryover.

"**Edge** will have the most carryover after drought in areas of low organic matter (three pre cent or less)," adds Luca. "Very sensitive crops such as oats and small seeded grasses should not be grown in the year following an Edge treatment. For fields with potential carryovers, barley is the most tolerant followed by spring wheat or durum."

Odyssey can have carryover potential after a drought, with more of a concern in areas of low organic matter (three per cent or less) and low pH (below pH 6). Producers should try to avoid sensitive crops. ***Crop Protection 2001***, the *Blue Book,* indicates that the most tolerant crops are spring wheat, durum wheat, field peas, and SMART canola. These crops may be safely grown the year following an Odyssey application.

"The acreage of peas and chickpeas are likely to increase in southern Alberta because of dry conditions and commodity prices," says Rob Dunn, cereal and oilseed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Lethbridge. "Producers thinking of adding pulse crops to their rotations should keep in mind potential carryover of herbicides applied in the last two to three years."

Assert has potential for carryover problems especially for areas of low pH (below pH 6). Producers should only seed spring wheat, durum, barley, SMART canola or sunflowers the year following Assert. Two years after application, the above crops may be grown along with, peas, canola, flax, oats and canary grass. A field bioassay is recommended before planting lentils or sugar beets.

Anthem and **Unity** is a problem for many broadleaf crops for at least two years after application. Anthem treated fields may be seeded only to wheat and SMART canola the year following application. In the second year after treatment, acceptable crops include durum, barley, canola, peas or flax. However, in areas with high pH (7.2 to 8) and low organic matter (three per cent or less), injury to crops other than wheat and SMART canola can occur within the recommended plant-back interval. For fields with these conditions, or for crops not listed in the *Blue Book*, do not plant for at least 22 months after application. A field bioassay must be conducted the year prior to growing the crop of interest to confirm crop safety.

For **Amber** and **Ally**, producers should also avoid planting broadleaf crops on fields treated in the last three years. For **Ally**, problems may be worse in areas of high pH (above 7.2). For the Brown and Dark Brown soil zones, if rainfall is less than 130 mm, producers should extend the rotational interval by one year.

Depending on soil pH, producers should seed cereals if **Amber** has been applied in the last two to four years. For soils with a pH of greater than 7.5, a field bioassay should be conducted to ensure safety.

"Careful planning for crop and herbicide rotations is very important," says Dunn. "There are also some other management practices that may help minimize residue problems. Seeding shallow into a warm moist seedbed promotes rapid germination and emergence and may help reduce potential for crop injury. Increasing seeding rate by 5 to 10 per cent may also help to alleviate problems of reduced plant stand and yield due to herbicide carryover."

One of the best ways to determine whether or not herbicide carryover could be a problem is to do a bioassay. A bioasssay is a very crude test that roughly determines the effect of residue on subsequent crop growth. The test is easily conducted by taking surface soil samples and growing the intended crop in a few pots, some with the suspect soil and some in a known herbicide free soil. A measure can then be taken of seedlings that emerge, seedling vigour, and any plant damage, such as leaf burning or growth suppression. A laboratory chemical test is more expensive and will only indicate if a chemical is present, however, this may be appropriate for some situations.

"Carryover is a potential problem for 2001," says Frank. "However, the problems can be avoided with careful planning of rotations, checking labels, and good management practices."

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For further information contact the local Alberta Agriculture cereal and oilseed specialist

Gordon Frank	Brooks	(403) 362-1212
Wendy Schatz	Claresholm	(403) 625-1445
Rob Dunn	Lethbridge	(403) 381-5237
Scott Meers	Strathmore	(403) 934-3355
Dave Spencer	Medicine Hat	(403) 529-3616
Gayle Luca	Vulcan	(403) 485-2236
Brian Hunt	Taber	(403) 223-7908
Carrie Rogers-Butterwick	Foremost	(403) 867-3606

Contact: Gayle Luca
(403) 485-2236
Rob Dunn
(403) 381-5237

Growing Global Conference a success!

Over 300 participants came together on March 5 to 7, 2001 to hear about new opportunities in organic and diversified agriculture. ***Growing Global*** was the theme. Producers and processors were able to network with international and national speakers, as well as individuals who shared their interest from across western Canada.

"The audience was rewarded with a diversity of presentations," says Dr. Stan Blade, unit leader of new crop development and director of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton.

Florence Sender, Food Logic Inc., Boston Massachusetts, opened the conference and communicated a message about the growth of the organic sector and the importance of paying attention to the consumer. Dr. Elaine Ingham, Oregon State University, captured the audience's interest speaking about her research on the Food Soil Web and the importance of soil microbiology and its diversity. Prof. Jules Janick, Purdue University, Indiana, challenged the audience to consider a wide array of new crops which have potential in western Canada. Dr. Kathleen Delate, Iowa State University, discussed organic crop management strategies. Other speakers made presentations on marketing opportunities for organic and natural beef. Several Alberta speakers, including Pat Maloney, Prairie Sun Grains Inc., Calgary, and local organic product retailers, shared their experience in accessing domestic and international markets with their products.

"Organic producers were very interested to hear about the current state of the U.S. organic rules from the leader of the National Program, Mr. Keith Jones," says Mike Dolinski, organic specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "Conference attendees involved in production and processing of medicinal plants heard the newest information regarding the role of Health Canada's Natural Health Products Directorate."

"The **Growing Global Conference** was developed to identify opportunities that can be of direct benefit to the agricultural sector," adds Blade.

The conference was the result of the combined efforts of two unique groups; the *Go Organic!* team that staged a very successful conference in Edmonton (March, 2000), and the Fifth Western Canadian Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Conference team. The first Prairie Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Conference was held in Olds, Alberta (March, 1996). Subsequent meetings have been organized in Manitoba (1997), Saskatchewan (1998), Kelowna (1999) and Saskatchewan (2000, as part of the International Herbs Association meetings).

The conference was organized to bring together internationally-recognized speakers who addressed a wide variety of topics that dealt with how Albertans can diversify products for a discerning marketplace. The attentive audience had the opportunity to hear about leading edge research in new opportunities in both crops and livestock.

Those unable to attend the conference and who would like to purchase a copy of the *Growing Global* binder that contains the speaker presentations, can call Kathy Czuy at (780) 427-4242. Copies of the binder are $20 plus GST (includes shipping and handling).

Contact: Mike Dolinski
(780) 422-4873
Stan Blade
(780) 415-2311
Trace Johnston – Alberta New Crops Network
(780) 490-5132
Steve Snider – Alberta Organic Association
(780) 855-2164

World stocks of wheat and barley down

The Canadian Wheat Board's PRO commentary of February 26, 2001 had some encouraging news for wheat and barley growers. World ending stocks for both of these crops have been dropping. For wheat, stocks are at a 40-year low and barley stocks have dropped for the last four years. This is the type of news that can lead to stronger prices.

"What looks like a promising scenario does not always turn out that way, however," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "A bumper crop in some part of the world or a change in use patterns can turn things around in a hurry. Tighter supplies, however, do put people in a different mood. Since this year's crop has a bigger influence on total stocks buyers and sellers react more to changes that occur during the growing season."

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Ending stocks may not be low enough to make big differences in seeding intentions. With higher costs of inputs this year, it will take a significant shift in prices to get many people excited about growing cereals. The reactions to weather changes may create some opportunities for pricing though. True marketers will lock in a price for a portion of their crops when the opportunity arises.

"To take advantage of weather markets, growers have to have a good handle on costs of production," adds Hockridge. "What it costs to grow a crop will not have any influence on the market, but it lets the farmer know when a profit can be locked in. There is always a temptation to hold on for higher prices until the market has passed its peak. Locking in a profit for part of the crop gives much more flexibility in how the rest is marketed.

"When making cropping plans, crop rotation should be the main influencing factor. Economic factors do force farmers away from the things they consider to be the best management practices though. The wheat board commentary gives a hint that there could be some opportunity to make a little money on cereals this year. That should, at least, make it easier to make cropping management decisions."

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

Watch for bedding plant diseases at early stages

While greenhouse bedding plant growers are busy seeding and transplanting hundreds of different types of plants for sale in May, it is also a critical time to pay close attention to good transplanting techniques and proper watering to avoid root damage and water logged conditions.

"Young plants are very susceptible to many root diseases," says Dr. Piara Bains, plant pathologist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "These diseases are primarily caused by fungi that can come from water or air or be present in the growing mix. Fungus like *Pythium* spp. can cause pre-emergence damping-off, and under water logged conditions, post-emergence damping-off of seedlings. Other fungal pathogens, including *Fusarium* spp., *Phytophthora* spp., and *Rhizoctonia* spp., can also cause damping-off and root rot of bedding plants.

"A porous growing mix is better for germination and early plant establishment, adds Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist at CDCN.

The best way to protect crops from diseases is by exclusion, to avoid infection. An integrated approach is the best approach for plant disease management. Use cultivars that are resistant to most common diseases. In reality, there are not many cultivars that possess desirable horticultural characteristics and are also resistant to common diseases like damping-off and gray mould.

"Use disease-free seeds and cuttings," says Mirza. "Disinfect tools and other greenhouse equipment regularly. Keep sanitation in and around the greenhouses, weeds and plant refuse are major sources of plant pathogens for initiation of diseases. Follow sound production practices, provide optimal growing conditions and control insect pests."

Even with best possible efforts, however, diseases can occur on bedding plants. The challenge then is to correctly diagnose the disease and use effective registered chemical for its control. Incorrect disease diagnosis and use of ineffective chemical will result in huge economic losses. A list if registered chemicals is included in ***Bedding Plants Production Guidelines***, a publication of Crop Diversification Centre North, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. Copies of the publication are available by calling CDCN at (780) 422-1789. Government numbers are toll free by dialling 310-0000 and then the number.

Contact: Dr. Piara Bains — (780) 415-2302
Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza — (780) 415-2303

Census paints a clear picture of farming

On Tuesday, May 15, farm operators will be asked to update the profile of Canadian farm businesses by completing the 2001 Census of Agriculture questionnaire.

"Persons responsible for the day-to-day management decisions of an agricultural operation should report themselves as agricultural operators," says Kendall Olson, communications officer, 2001 Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada. "In 2001, questions about organic farming and farmers' use of computers for business have been added to the standard questions on crops, livestock, agricultural labour, machinery and equipment, farm income and land management practices."

The Census of Agriculture puts the industry in focus for many groups, including individual operators, farm organizations, agribusiness, governments and academics. Census data provide comprehensive information on the industry from the township or rural municipality level to the national level, and on topics ranging from crops to computers.

Census data are used to:

- portray the viewpoints of farm operators to legislators, the media and the public
- plan how and where to market agricultural products and services

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- evaluate the impact on agriculture of floods, droughts or other natural disasters
- develop, implement and evaluate agricultural policies and programs, such as farm income safety nets or those pertaining to environmental sustainability or rural development

Information gathered by the census is so important, Statistics Canada is legally required to conduct a census every five years. By the same law, Statistics Canada is required to protect the information provided on Census of Agriculture forms.

For more information about the Census of Agriculture, visit the Statistics Canada Web site at <**www.statcan.ca**>. On Tuesday, May 15th, ***count yourself in*** as part of Canada's farm community.

Contact: Kendall Olson
(780) 495-4655

Towards a market focus: 10 tips for negotiating successful alliances

There are many examples of partnerships, alliances and value-chains being used in the agriculture industry. Strategically forming business relationships to work together for a mutual profit/benefit is what forming alliances is all about.

- ***Trace Safe*** a farmer owned and controlled business partnership with other producers, feedmills and abattoirs to market into high quality and specialist niche markets;
- ***Swiss Chalet*** forms value chain involving businesses right from pasture to plate to bring a consistent quality product to their consumers;
- Agriculture producers form a business alliance to bulk purchase agriculture inputs.

"Many Albertans in the agriculture industry are seriously considering the value of forming alliances, partnerships, or value chains," says Laura Lee Billings, rural development specialist – organizations with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Three Hills. "A few of these alliances have moved from a production to a market or a customer focus. Dr. Boehlje, agriculture economist from Purdue University, who recently spoke at the Competitive Advantage Program in Alberta, argues that this is similar to other business models where alliances take place between businesses - even between businesses that previously were competitors."

Social Capital Skills

An alignment means developing social capital skills. For example, farm operators need to be able to develop relationships and contracts with buyers. They need to be able to negotiate effectively with partners, alliances and networks.

Ten tips for negotiating a business alliance were presented at a Manitoba Agriculture and Food seminar on Building Strategic Business Alliances:

- know your strategy and expectations
- negotiate as equals
- explore benefits together
- do not rush
- build understanding and trust
- discuss protecting proprietary information
- give as well as take
- use a non-binding letter of intent
- leave room for evolution
- do no be afraid to walk away

"The benefit of an alliance is that eventually fluctuations in the cash flow in the industry will be shared among the partners in the alliance on an ongoing basis, rather than being shouldered by one sector at a time," says Page Stuart research manager of Highland Premium Alberta Beef Alliance in an article in *Canadian Cattlemen*, Fall 2000.

For further information about value chains in Alberta's agriculture industry, contact Laura Lee Billing at (403) 443-8525 or e-mail <**LauraLee.Billings@agric.gov.ab.ca**>.

This is article six of a 10-part series on ***Moving Towards a Market Focus***. Previous articles in the series are available on the Alberta Agriculture website at: <**www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify**>.

Contact: Laura Lee Billings
(403) 443-8525

Pest advisory note

The staff of the Entomology and Greenhouse Crops Program at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN) in Edmonton, have been reporting on insect problems in greenhouses for the past few years.

"Insect related issues are published in ***Greenhouse Coverings***, but by the time information reaches growers it is often too late to make decisions," says Dr. Kwesi Ampong-Nyarko, entomologist at CDCN.

In greenhouse situations, insects can multiply rapidly due to ideal environmental conditions. In order to get the insect monitoring results to growers quickly and in time, a weekly Pest Advisory Note (PAN) for bedding plant growers in Alberta is being published.

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"PAN will be a one-page publication highlighting the insects trapped on yellow sticky traps, and will report on strategies to control them," says Ampong-Nyarko.

"By providing this timely information to bedding plant growers, it is hoped that growers can effectively manage the insects in their greenhouses and thus grow good quality bedding plants," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist at CDCN. "The need for a one-pager that provides timely information on insects in bedding plants was identified at the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association workshop held in February, 2001 in Edmonton. Dr. Ken Fry, entomologist with Alberta Agriculture, will contribute his bio-control expertise in PAN."

Growers who are interested in being on the mailing list should send their fax numbers or e-mail addresses to <**kwesi.ampong-nyarko@ gov.ab.ca**> or <**mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca**>. This information will also be posted on Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association Website <**www.agga.ca**>.

Contact: *Kwesi Ampong-Nyarko* *Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza*
(780) 415-2316 *(780) 415-2305*

Rural youth have their say

More than 1000 young Albertans aged 13 to 21 years discussed mental and sexual health, poverty, violence, diversity and difference, and substance abuse. **Your Choice . . . Your Voice** forums were held in seven locations throughout the province in November of 2000 and 4-H members ensured that views of rural youth were heard.

"Alberta Children's Services hosted the conference. Many partners and sponsors helped with planning and expenses," says Barb Stroh. "The 4-H Branch, with assistance from Canada Agricultural Rural Initiatives (CARCI), a program of the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development (CARD) fund of Agriculture, Agri-Food Canada, coordinated the attendance of rural youth, both 4-H and non 4-H, to the conferences."

Young Albertans stepped up to the challenge of being involved. Youth planning committees were set up in each location to identify local issues, assist with the planning and program development, and meet the needs of area youth. Topics discussed at each forum varied, but each forum provided time for attendees to discuss and learn about issues, develop action plans, and present the action plans. The day away from school was a very different experience. These are some of the quotes and reactions from participants:

- "Most other information sessions seem to throw at you the 'Do and Don't of Life'– this forum involved you and had you come to your own conclusions," 4-H member at Lethbridge forum.
- "It was more interesting than I thought it would be...it was about serious things," 4-H member at Calgary forum.
- "I thought that poverty was in Africa not in Edmonton, Alberta – I really had my eyes opened after having the opportunity to talk to teens living on the streets," 4-H member at Edmonton forum.
- "I learned a lot...other kids are bored and have nothing to do, just like me," 4-H member at Grande Prairie forum.
- "Kids really want someone to talk to and someone to listen to their fears and concerns. Often adults, parents and teachers are ill prepared and afraid to discuss real issues, so we avoid talking and listening and resort to lecturing and yelling," adult participant.

At the end of each day, the doors were opened and MLA's, adults, and community leaders listened to the actions plans. Youth recommended: having a jamboree or a multicultural event to end discrimination; promoting anti-violence messages with posters and commercials; encouraging schools to consider improving students mental health through youth speakers and playing happy music; and, producing a video on sexual health. All of the action plans are posted on the Support Network's Web site at <**www.youthone.com**>.

How will the action ideas affect youth service providers such as 4-H? The 4-H Branch is discussing how the action ideas might influence future plans. For example, 4-H is seen by many of the youth service providers as one of the solutions to youth issues. In the future, 4-H will look at ways to increase partnerships with other service providers in the province.

"4-H is considering testing programs and projects to see if there are better ways to involve youth in decisions that affect them," says Marguerite Stark, provincial 4-H programs specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "4-H is challenging members, clubs, district and regional councils to take a close look at the actions coming out of the forums to determine any fit with the 4-H mandate and goals that should be supported. 4-H is looking for opportunities to expose members who did not attend the forums, to speakers and features of the forums. 4-H is planning how to prepare and get rural youth to be active participants in future consultations."

Youth appreciated the opportunity to get involved and be heard. They unanimously agreed they wanted to be invited to consultations again.

For more information contact Stark at (403) 948-8510 (toll-free by dialling 310-0000 and then the number) or e-mail <**marguerite.stark@gov.ab.ca**>.

Contact: *Marguerite Stark*
(403) 948-8510

Agri-News Briefs

Sheep sweepstakes

The Southern Alberta Sheep Breeders Association is holding Sweepstakes 2001 on June 1 and 2, 2001 at the North County Recreation Centre, Picture Butte. The event is open to all sheep producers, commercial breeders, purebred breeders, large producers and small producers. Several sheep judging competitions such as pen of three ewe lambs, market lamb and costume class, will be held. Displays, demonstrations, a trade show and a workshop for predator control are also part of the weekend events. For further information, or to obtain entry form packages, call Mic Thiessen at (403) 327-8808 or Frances Pittman at (403) 757-2395.

Alberta 4-H members explore Career Opportunities

Colleen Dear of Wetaskiwin has been selected to attend the National 4-H Careers conference held March 24 to April 1, 2001 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Along with 4-H members from across Canada, Dear will explore various career opportunities in agriculture and other related fields. This annual program co-ordinated and sponsored through the Canadian 4-H council provides the opportunity for 18 delegates from across Canada and 40 members from Manitoba to participate in a variety of industry visits and tours. Delegates will attend career counselling seminars, simulated job interviews, and speak to various representatives from government and industry. For further information contact Colleen Dear (780) 352-0576 or Marguerite Stark, provincial 4-H program specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie, (403) 948-8510.

Alberta 4-H Member travels to Washington DC

Jackie Yackimec was selected to represent Alberta 4-H members at the 71st U.S.A. National 4-H conference in Washington DC. On April 1 - 7, 2001. This is the 43rd year of Canadian 4-H delegate representation at the national program. Yackimec will be one of 10 Canadian delegates participating in the week long program. The conference in Washington provides the opportunity for over 300 4-H participants to share ideas and program content and participate in a variety of learning sessions. This years theme *Building a Global Community: Blueprint for Action* challenges 4-H members to examine various issues and take action to find solutions. Some of the issues they will be tackling include: accessibility to technology, workforce changes, education and agricultural challenges, and youth involvement. At the conference, youth will develop skills that engage their head, heart, hands, and health to create a blueprint for positive change in their home community. Through networking with other delegates, discussing issues that concern everyone and working hand in hand with others, they will continue to develop a blueprint for action to forge the path for 4-H in the new millennium. Jackie Yackimec was selected as Alberta's delegate almost a year ago at the Alberta 4-H Selections program. Her trip is sponsored by Semex Canada. For further information contact: Jackie Yackimec (780) 366-2295 or Marguerite Stark, provincial 4-H program specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie, (403) 948-8510.

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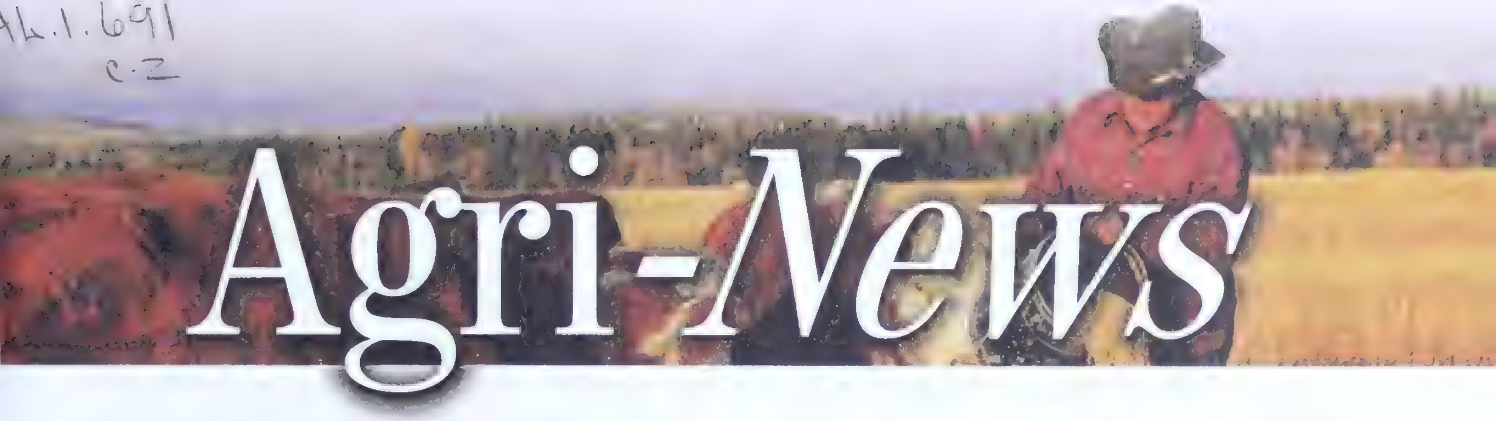

Agri-News

April 9, 2001

Traveler vigilance related to foot-and-mouth disease urged

In the wake of escalating occurrence of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in the United Kingdom and other parts of the European Union, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is recommending Albertans take extra precautions when travelling overseas to help ensure the disease is not transmitted to Alberta livestock.

In addition, Shirley McClellan, Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, has sent a letter to Agriculture and Agri-food Canada Minister Lyle Vanclief urging him to ensure vigilance in the protective measures in place to stop FMD from entering Canada.

"We recognize the risk of FMD coming to Canada may be considered small, but the potential economic consequences of this disease are enormous," says McClellan. "Alberta has a healthy and thriving livestock industry that relies heavily on our ability to export. Even the suspicion of a case of FMD could close our borders to trade and have devastating consequences for the provincial economy."

FMD is caused by a highly infectious virus that can be carried by humans. It affects cloven-hoofed animals including cattle, pigs, deer, elk, bison, sheep, goats, llamas, wild boar and pot-bellied pigs. It is extremely difficult to contain once it occurs.

As a result, travelers are asked to reassess their travel plans, in particular if they plan to have contact with the agricultural community on their return home. Visitors to the European Union are asked to follow the recommendations of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the federal agency responsible for this issue. These recommendations include:

- Refrain from returning home with meat or dairy or other livestock products from affected areas, as well as other livestock products.
- Refrain from contact with livestock, farm equipment on a livestock operation, animal feeds and slaughter plants for at least one week and preferably two weeks after returning to Canada. Alberta Agriculture also recommends a similar waiting period for travelers if they are planning excursions that could bring them into contact with wildlife on their return home.

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If you absolutely must visit areas where animals could be affected, proper sanitary precautions should be taken, including:

- No contact with livestock for three days.
- Use only clothing and footwear that has not been out of the country.
- Clean footwear of all dirt and or manure and disinfect with a solution of 50:50 water and vinegar or household bleach. Ensure all clothing is laundered and preferably dry-cleaned.
- Thorough showering or bathing, including cleaning under the fingernails, as soon as possible after entering Canada.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect luggage and equipment and other personal effects.

Alberta Agriculture also recommends farm businesses (including livestock producers, agri-tourism businesses) restrict visits by anyone who has been in the European Union or other affected areas for the last 14 days.

Albertans planning to visit countries that have been identified with an outbreak of FMD are advised to check with the CFIA on risks or limitations to their visits. Before booking travel, consumers are advised to review the terms of their arrangements carefully since there may not be provisions for refunds in the majority of cases. Every travel company sets out its own provisions for refunds or cancellations.

Alberta Agriculture has been in touch with National Defence and the CFIA and has been advised that greater precautionary measures have now been implemented for British military personnel who will be training at both CFB Suffield and CFB Wainwright.

For more information about FMD and how to stop its spread, please visit the following web-sites or call the numbers listed:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency <www.cfia-acia.agr.ca> or 1-877-227-0677 (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) TDD/TTY: 1-800-465-7735

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/livestock/fmd >.

Contact: *Dr. Gerald Ollis*
Chief Provincial Veterinarian
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 427-6535

For toll-free calling outside Edmonton dial 310-0000

Managed grazing benefits cattle producers

Increased production, net income and herd heath are among the benefits reported by producers using rotational grazing and riparian management practices, according to a study completed by University of Manitoba researchers.

"Producers who have adopted management practices that are considered to be environmentally friendly are saying these changes have been beneficial from a farm management and income standpoint," says Brenda Chorney, project researcher from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management.

Chorney and co-researcher, Rae Josephson, surveyed producers in the prairie provinces who have changed grazing, watering or riparian management practices. Profiles of operations were based on 1999 information. Of 346 respondents, 105 were from Alberta, and most were experienced cow-calf operators who depend heavily on livestock for their farm income. Operations ranged from less than 500 acres of pasture to well over 1,000 acres. A wide range of grazing systems and stocking rates were reported.

Highlights of reported changes with the new grazing and watering systems:

- Greater average weight gain (reported by 80%)
- Greater pasture forage quantity (91%)
- Greater pasture forage quality (88%)
- Increased overall net returns for operation (88%)

Respondents' rating of factors contributing to improvements in livestock weight gains:

- Improved forage quantity (88% felt this was important)
- Improved forage quality (88%)
- Improved forage use (85%)
- Cleaner drinking water (64%)

Other observed changes reported:

- Improved herd health and condition (72%)
- Better cover for wildlife (70%)
- Quality of water bodies improved (68%)

"In this study farmers and ranchers who have already adopted managed grazing methods share their results," says Grant Lastiwka, a pasture agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "I am pleased to see participant responses show that by using managed grazing there are greater opportunities for farm families to make profits. By adopting managed grazing systems, study participants found improved forage yields and quality, better herd performance and health along with positive environmental benefits."

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The study was supported and directed by a steering committee representing agricultural and conservation organizations; the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA), Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), Ducks Unlimited, Manitoba Cattle Producers Association,

Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC), Saskatchewan Wetlands Conservation Corporation, Manitoba Agriculture and Food, and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

The researchers note that the results are not based on experimental trials that would include weighing cattle or detailed rangeland assessments. The results are based on producers' own views of the costs and benefits of their grazing and watering system changes. "This initial work points to the kinds of research studies that should follow," says Chorney.

The producers, reporting capital costs that ranged from less than $7 per acre to over $30, pointed to lack of time and capital as the greatest barriers to adopting managed grazing. But having made the changes, no one said they would go back to their previous grazing systems.

"The results are good news," says Peggy Strankman, of the CCA. "When it comes to riparian areas, you really can have a win-win situation; cleaner water, more grazing for cattle, income benefits and more wildlife habitat."

Copies of the study are available in PDF format on-line on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/sustain/grazing.html>. Copies are also available on PFRA and CCA web sites <www.agr.gc.ca/pfra/pub/surpast.pdf> and <www.cattle.ca>.

Printed copies may be obtained from the MHHC, by calling (204) 784-4357 or e-mailing <mhhc@mhhc.mb.ca>.

Contact: *Janet Dietrich*
Conservation economics agrologist
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-3819

Considerations for crop management on dryland fields in drought conditions

Subsoil moisture on both fallow and stubble fields is critically low going into the spring of 2001 in southern Alberta. Fallow fields have a slightly greater moisture reserve than stubble, up to two inches of available moisture in the most affected areas. On the plus side stubble fields have a carry over of nitrogen in the soil from last year. It is strongly recommended that producers test their soil to find out how much nitrogen is present before they make seeding and fertility decisions.

"In addition to an already stressful situation, the cost of nitrogen fertilizer has increased substantially from last year," says Brian Hunt, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Taber. "With these factors in mind, growers must examine the pros and cons of the different dry land cropping options in southern Alberta."

Pulse crops, such as field peas, lentils, and chickpeas, fix their own nitrogen so do not require large amounts of added nitrogen fertilizer. Seriously consider seeding pulses on fields that test low in residual nitrogen.

"Of all the pulse crops, field peas are the least drought tolerant, however, they do use water efficiently when supply is adequate," adds Hunt. "Lentils are nitrogen fixing legumes and, like field peas, become lazy if placed in a field with high levels of nitrogen. Lentils are more drought tolerant than peas and as such may do better on stubble than field peas if conditions remain extremely dry.

"Chickpeas are also nitrogen fixing legumes so the same rules apply. Avoid fields with high nitrogen levels. Chickpeas are considered to be the most drought tolerant of the pulse crops. In 2000, there was a distinct advantage to seeding chickpeas into fallow ground. In a year with adequate moisture, this could cause delayed maturity. This spring, seeding chickpeas on fallow ground may be a wise choice."

Growers must be aware that chickpeas seek moisture to depth. As a result, the soil profile in the stubble for the following year will be depleted. The rooting depth of chickpeas is similar to wheat, so moisture depletion the following year may adversely affect the succeeding crop.

"Canola in general is not a drought tolerant crop and if seeded into a dryland field, it could suffer greatly due to lack of moisture. Add to that the threats of flea beetles and cabbage seed pod weevils, and canola is a higher risk crop in southern Alberta given present soil moisture conditions," says Hunt. "If canola is seeded this spring, consider seeding a Polish variety rather than an Argentine variety. Seed the canola as early as possible to avoid excessively hot and dry conditions which can blast the flowers. Since Polish canola flowers earlier, the chances of the crop completing flowering prior to the risk period are better."

Mustards are much more drought tolerant than canola and as such would have a lower risk rating in dryland conditions. Brown or oriental mustard (*Brassica juncea*) is slightly more drought tolerant than Polish canola, yellow mustard (*Sinapsis alba*) is rated as being the most drought tolerant. Yellow mustard is also not affected by the larval stage of the cabbage seed pod weevil, giving this variety an added advantage.

Cereal crops range in their ability to resist drought from good to poor. Fall rye and spring rye are considered to be very tolerant of dry conditions. Next in tolerance are the triticale varieties, both winter and spring. Hard red spring wheats and

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durum wheat are next in their drought tolerance. Two-row barley is more drought tolerant than the six-row barley varieties and prairie spring wheat. The least drought tolerant of the cereals crops are the extra strong class of wheats and all oat varieties.

"One key consideration in selecting a wheat variety is the potential for a high wheat stem sawfly infestation this year," continues Hunt. "The sawfly was seen in high numbers throughout southern Alberta in 2000 on wheat, rye, triticale, durum, and some varieties of barley. All of the wheat classes, including durum, are susceptible to sawfly damage. The recommended strategy for combating wheat stem sawfly is to grow resistant wheat varieties that are solid stemmed such as AC Abbey, AC Eatonia, Lancer, or Leader. For more information on developing a Sawfly strategy, contact your local Alberta Agriculture district office."

Two-row barley derives most of its yield from the main head, so is more tolerant of dry conditions later in the growing season. Six-row barley relies on tillers to give the extra bushels. Dry conditions later in the growing season have a larger impact on the yield potential and bushel weights of the six-row varieties.

In the case of malt varieties, growers should be aware of the residual nitrogen in the soil when selecting a field. An excess of nitrogen combined with stress on the malt variety could increase the protein levels and cause the sample to be rejected if the protein is in excess of 12.5 per cent.

"Seeding the crop as early as possible is a common tactic used by producers when facing dry conditions," says Hunt. "The practice of lowering the seeding rates to maximize water use is also commonly considered, however, there is no quantitative evidence to show the effectiveness of the practice."

Another strategy for fields that have high residual nitrogen, is to seed durum wheat or spring wheat that benefit from the higher nitrogen levels by producing a higher protein sample.

"No matter what the cropping intentions are for a field, the main concern is to conserve the moisture that is already present in the spring," says Hunt. "Reduce or eliminate as much spring tillage as possible to conserve the soil moisture. If possible, direct seed into standing stubble and fallow fields alike. At harvest leave as much residue in the fields as possible to reduce the risks of soil erosion."

Crop Insurance is one of the risk management options that growers should consider. Producers can contact the local Agricultural Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) office to see what coverage best suits their operation.

For further information contact the local Alberta Agriculture district office or contact one of Alberta Agriculture's crop specialists:

Gordon Frank, Brooks	(403) 362-1212
Wendy Schatz, Claresholm	(403) 625-1445
Carrie Rogers-Butterwick, Foremost	(403) 867-3606
Rob Dunn, Lethbridge	(403) 3815237
Scott Meers, Strathmore	(403) 934-3355
Dave Spencer, Medicine Hat	(403) 529-3616
Gayle Luca, Vulcan	(403) 485-2236
Brian Hunt, Taber	(403) 223-7908

Contact: Brian Hunt
(403) 223-7908

Alberta Research Council unveils new varieties of native grass

Growers and users of native plants now have two new grass varieties to choose from – *ARC Mountain View Junegrass* and *ARC Sentinel Spike Trisetum*. The grasses were developed by the Alberta Research Council's (ARC) Native Plant program for use in landscape enhancement, reclamation of disturbed land and wildlife management. The program has released seven varieties of native grasses to date.

"These new grasses help meet the burgeoning demand for plant material that is suitable for reclaiming man-made and natural disturbances," says Jay Woosaree, ARC's native plant development project manager.

Both varieties have been awarded certification of eligibility by the Canadian Seed Growers' Association. Marketing and distribution rights have been awarded to Prairie Seeds Ltd., Nisku.

"The greatest obstacle to the use of native plants is their specialized adaptation and availability of commercial volumes of seed," says Dave Ingledew, president of Prairie Seeds. "The native plant varieties released by ARC establish a proven production base and employ improved technologies, which reduces cost and risk associated with native seed production. As more production becomes available, the cost of seed is reduced."

Reclamation varieties have received global interest, and ARC is one of the few Canadian organizations developing suitable sources of material for the reclamation industry. New crops springing from these releases also provide an added opportunity for crop diversification for Alberta's agricultural and horticultural industry.

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ARC develops and commercializes technologies to give customers a competitive advantage. The corporation performs applied research and development on a contract or fee basis, and co-ventures with others to develop new technologies, deriving a return on investment from the commercialization of new products and processes. ARC also conducts applied research projects for the public good and to support provincial science and technology needs and strategies.

Contact: *Jay Woosaree*
Native Plant Development, ARC
(780) 632 - 8209
<jay@arc.ab.ca>

Byron James
Native Plant Development, ARC
(780) 632 - 8219
<byron@arc.ab.ca>

Applied research in vegetable crops

The Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks, has an ongoing applied research program with a main focus on solving production problems for commercial vegetable producers in the province. The majority of commercial producers are located in southern Alberta where irrigation and a long growing season offer greater opportunity for crop diversification into specialty crops such as vegetables.

"Perhaps the best established commercial vegetable crop in the province is carrots," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at CDCS. "There are a number of producers supplying primarily the fresh market with cello pack carrots. A relatively new market development is the cut'n peel carrot. This is the ready-to-use baby carrot that is produced from a specialized *Imperator* type that is cut to length and then shaved to produce uniform cuts. For producers, the culture of these carrots requires a very precise control on plant population. Research at Brooks has shown that a plant population of 1.2 million plants per acre is required to encourage root extension to its maximum while keeping crown diameter to the desired 3/8 to 7/8 of an inch for maximum processing recovery. With the continued introduction of new varieties for this growing market, the research into plant population management is ongoing."

Cooking onions is another established crop in Alberta. Traditionally, producers have direct seeded the crop to produce a medium grade bulb. Colossal grade bulbs, the largest grade possible, were not traditionally grown in Alberta, however, research trials at Brooks have shown that some varieties when transplanted produce these colossal grade bulbs that fully mature and can be stored for the winter market. Variety testing is ongoing as is selection of varieties for single-eye production destined for the onion ring market. With the direct seed crop and a continually improving selection of varieties, producers are now able to produce jumbo grade bulbs that have been difficult to grow in Alberta due to maturity problems. These jumbo bulbs, one grade smaller than colossal, mature only if precise plant populations are used with specific varieties.

"Garlic is not a major crop in the province, however, it does receive much attention and interest because of its reported medicinal benefits," adds Barkley. "Trials at Brooks have added a large collection of varieties well suited to production in southern Alberta. Many varieties have also been rejected. Recommendations have been developed for fall planting as the best measure to achieve early maturity and good bulb sizing. Years of fertility trials with nitrogen and phosphorus have failed to improve bulb sizing. Bulb sizing appears to be limited by genetics even under the best of growing conditions."

Celery is a very difficult crop to grow. It is traditionally grown on mucky peat soils and growing it on mineral soils is a real challenge. Celery grows very well in southern Alberta and research has shown that, with careful variety selection and proper plant spacing, the market requirement for long, tender stalks can be met. More recently, the application of a growth regulator at a modest concentration has shown to be very effective at stem elongation. This application solves the problem of stems being too short at early harvest. Currently, research is focused on timing of growth regulator application, a management practice that will assist the producer to access the market earlier in the season.

Contact: *Shelley Barkley*
(403) 362-1305

4-H leaders travel to Wyoming

Two Alberta 4-H Leaders, Mel Clark from St. Albert and John Bartram from Dunmore have traveled to Sheridan, Wyoming to take part in the in the Annual Western Regional 4-H Leaders forum. This annual program involves almost 550 4-H leaders and staff from across the Western US and Canada. Alberta 4-H leaders are also accompanied by Jocelyn McKinnon, regional 4-H Specialist, Barrhead.

Bartram, a leader from the Wild Rose 4-H Equestrian Club, is looking forward to meeting new 4-H people and sharing experiences in 4-H. Bartram says " I hope to attend several workshops so that I can learn new things about 4-H and bring these new ideas back to my club and district."

Clark, celebrating over 35 years as a leader with the Bon Accord 4-H Club, still wants to gain more knowledge to bring back to his club, his district and the province. He is looking forward to meeting other 4-H leaders and sharing information with them. While at the program, Clark will be recognized for over 30 years of dedication to the 4-H program.

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At the forum, over 150 different workshops are offered for the 4-H participants. Hands on learning, recruiting and retaining members, teaching tips and techniques, making meetings fun and exploring new project areas are just a few of the options open for 4-H leaders. The forum's goal is to provide training courses that will serve youth in the leaders home community.

Alberta 4-H leaders are selected through the Alberta 4-H Leader Development program, and are sponsored by the Alberta 4-H programs trust.

Contact:	*Jocelyn McKinnon* *780-674-8250*	*Marguerite Stark* *403-948-8510*

Towards a market focus: Partnering for competitive advantage – innovative collaborations

With the rapidly changing marketplace driving the need to change the way business is done, partnering through innovative collaboration may be a strategy to consider for any market. Agri-businesses are facing increased pressure from global markets, customer demands and ever-increasing competition. The expected benefit of partnering for an agri-business is a competitive advantage.

"Innovative collaboration is defined as new ways of working together or new ways of working with the enemy," says Kathy Lowther, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "Whichever definition is chosen, creative thinking and a clearly defined purpose for working together is required to achieve results."

In today's business environment, partnering goes by many names depending on the purpose of the arrangement. Some of the more popular terms are:

- **Consortium** – includes similar businesses in similar industries that pool resources to gain a benefit they couldn't achieve on their own.
- **Strategic alliances and networks** – a longer term agreement or collaborative relationship between businesses for achieving common objectives. In a network, the individuals remain autonomous, but have ready access to the resources of each other of the individuals in the network. Both strategic alliances and networks involve more than one individual or organization working together, with mutual benefit being the primary objective.

To pursue a specific opportunity, business may take the next step of forming a joint venture. A joint venture contract is generally developed for a limited purpose or for a limited duration.

- **Cooperative marketing** – is an agreement to market partners' products or services through joint promotion. For markets requiring a guarantee of large volumes of product, a marketing cooperative may be a good option to meet this market demand that is difficult to fill by individuals.
- **Value-chain relationship** – a series of functions moving production of the primary inputs, through operations, marketing, and final delivery to the consumer. This may all happen with in a single company, but will most likely involve a series of separate companies working toward the production of the final good or service.

Other business terms used in the agri-food processing industry include: collaboration, supply chain alliances, value chain alliances, vertical coordination, agri-chain competence and partner shipping. There are several examples of innovative collaborations:

- contract growing of crops and production of livestock – many companies and processors contract with producers to meet quality standards and supply requirements for a variety of products.
- agri-businesses and cooperative marketing groups – work together to consolidate individual purchasing and marketing efforts. Under this arrangement, they purchase inputs and supplies as a group to take advantage of bulk purchase discounts. This also allows for better supply management and market expansion.
- a group of producers getting together to hire producer agents – the agents provide marketing expertise to develop and expand target markets.
- co-innovation – companies work together with universities and research institutions to solve problems, establish product standards and improve technologies, and more.

"Agri-businesses have only just begun to realize the opportunities and potential in the agri-food sector," says Lori-Jo Graham, Alberta Agriculture's rural development specialist-business in Olds. "The ability to cooperate with other companies or organizations and to create win-win situations will be a key factor in the expansion of our industry."

"While some types of collaboration are a form of doing business, others, such as joint ventures, are legal structures that require contractual arrangements," continues Kathy Lowther, Alberta Agriculture's rural development specialist-business in Airdrie. "Always get advice from legal and accounting professionals before forming new business structures."

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A good resource recently released by the Canadian Farm Business Management Council is ***Agriculture and Agri-Business Structures: A Practical Guidebook***. The publication provides information of the various for-profit business structures surrounding many of these options, as well as structures suitable for service and support organizations. The cost of the publication is $29. To order, call 1-888-232-3262 or order online: <www.cfbmc.com>.

This is article seven of a 10-part series on Moving Towards a Market Focus. Previous articles in the series are available on the Alberta Agriculture website at: <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>

Contact: *Kathy Lowther* *(403) 948-8537* *Lori-Jo Graham* *(403) 556-4244*

Agri-News Briefs

A tractor rollover can take as little as two seconds

The Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program has established that working with tractors and other self-propelled equipment is still the number one cause of death and injury to Canadian farmers. Of these equipment related fatalities and injuries, run-overs are the number one cause; followed by unspecified rollovers and rear overturns. Collectively, rollovers account for almost half of farm fatalities, usually the result of operator fatigue or distraction. Farmers are advised to have rollover protective structures (ROPS) installed on older models that do not already have ROPS as standard features. When it comes to safety, there's no room for compromise. Work safe and be safe by taking all the necessary precautions. For further in formation, contact Solomon Kyeremanteng, manager of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm safety program, (780) 427-4227.

4-H delegates celebrate Canada – home to one and all

Approximately 50 4-H members from across Canada got together on March 30 to April 5, 2001 in Ottawa to learn and explore the many issues surrounding citizenship and the political process. 4-H members from Alberta included: Karen Broadbent from Lac La Biche; Caitlyn DeBruyne, Westerose; Josh Labonte, Plamondon; Megan McLenaghan, Barrhead; Mary Rutledge, Wainwright; and, Dawn Sunderman, Alderflats. Throughout the five days of intense study, the delegates became aware of how youth can influence the political process and gain an understanding of current issues the government is working with. Stacy Murray, regional 4-H specialist from Fairview accompanied the group. Delegates had the opportunity to attend Question Period and citizenship court, and tour the parliamentary buildings and the supreme court. They also prepared and participated in a mock parliamentary debate on Canada Immigration Policy. Alberta 4-H delegates were selected almost a year ago through the Alberta 4-H selections process. This annual program is sponsored through the Canadian 4-H Council and Agricore. For further information, contact Murray at (780) 835-2241 or Marguerite Stark at (403) 948-8510.

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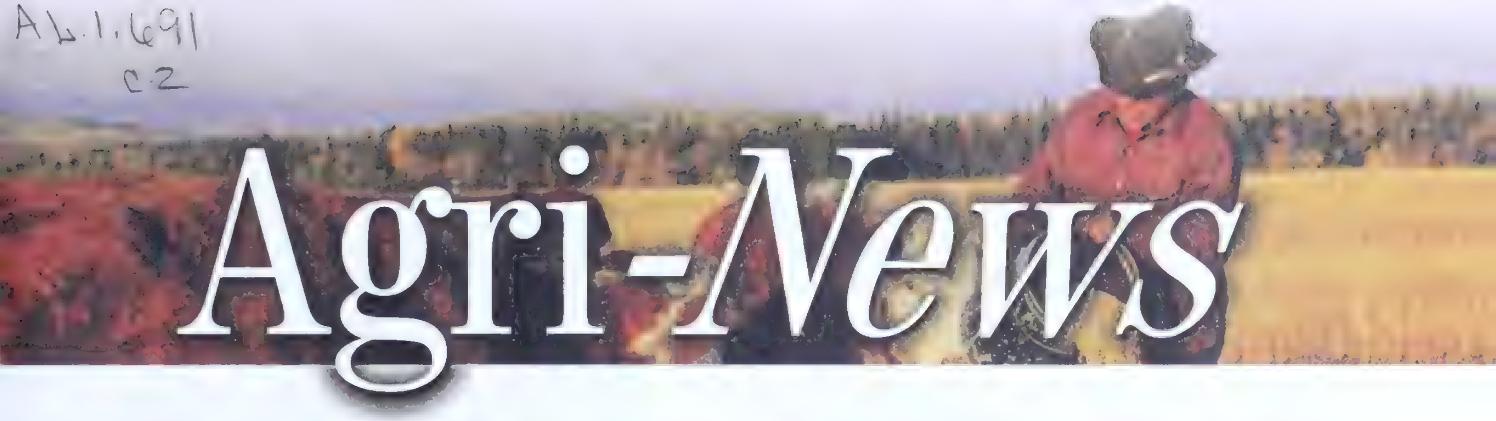

Agri-News

April 16, 2001

Soil conservation for dryland – the 1000 pound rule

Soil erosion on dryland will be a greater concern over the next year because of last summer's drought. Low crop yields have reduced the amount of crop residue to critical levels on many fields and conservation practices are needed to protect remaining residue.

"Wind or water erosion is a greater risk whenever the soil cover drops below 1000 lbs per acre, depending on soil type and field situation," says Don Wentz, soil salinity specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "Soil conservation practices, such as strip cropping, re-cropping and permanent cover, are used extensively on dryland to reduce soil degradation on highly erodible soil types."

An average wheat crop produces about 80 lbs of residue per bushel of harvested grain. This ratio may not work when moisture conditions are on the extreme high or low end. For example, during drought conditions, some wheat crops will produce a lot of straw but run out of moisture for grain.

"Last year's wheat grown on stubble may have only yielded 10 bushels per acre, but residue production looks to be over 1000 lbs for most fields," continues Rob Dunn, cereal and oilseed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Lethbridge. "Wheat on fallow yielded about 25 bushels per acre with residue levels estimated at 2000 to 2500 lbs. Barley will have similar amounts with canola and mustard less because of lower yields. Pulse crops are worse yet because of poor yields and lower residue produced per bushel of harvested grain. Cereal and oilseed crops have the added advantage of standing stubble that is more effective at trapping snow and preventing erosion compared to pulses."

The residue produced by last year's crop is aided by any carryover from previous year that could vary from a little to a lot, depending on the rotation and tillage practices. Chemical fallow or direct seeding will retain more carryover, buffering the effects of subsequent dry years or lower residue broadleaf crops.

"Residue levels should be adequate for fields being re-cropped provided they are direct seeded," adds Dunn. "However, farmers who want to start a fallow period have a greater challenge because of the length of time between now and the

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next crop. Keep in mind that surface residue can decompose fairly quickly on the soil surface, even without tillage. Expect a 50 to 70 per cent reduction in cereal stubble biomass and a 75 to 85 per cent reduction for canola or mustard biomass, with no-tillage one year after harvest. The breakdown rate is affected by moisture conditions and the carbon to nitrogen ratio of the straw. Straw types with lower carbon to nitrogen ratios tend to break down more quickly."

Chemical fallow is the best practice for conserving residue on summer fallow but a combination of chemical and blade or sweep tillage can also be effective because of the combined effect of some residue with a rough soil surface. Chemical fallow with cereal or oilseed stubble has the added benefit of improved snow catch through winter that can be very important during drier years. Plan for a further 20 per cent reduction in residue with each sweep tillage operation.

Pulse stubble should be re-cropped or cover-cropped to a cereal unless there is a very heavy carryover of residue from previous years. Aggravating the situation of low residue production from pulses is the rapid decomposition under normal field conditions. Research at Lethbridge has shown that pulse residue can decompose very rapidly during a fallow period. Minimum tillage plots lost 92 per cent and chemical fallowed plots lost 83 per cent of their cover within a year of harvest. Very little cover was left to control erosion during the critical second winter and spring seeding period. Pulse residue decomposes very quickly because of the higher nitrogen content in the straw compared to cereal or oilseed crops.

"Farmers wanting to fallow a low residue field should consider a spring cover-crop or winter cereal at the end of the summer," says Dunn. "Cover crops can be terminated with herbicide in mid-June to ensure that enough residue is left to protect the soil through winter. The best option may be to seed a winter cereal in late August or early September. Early planting into good moisture is critical to get enough growth to prevent wind erosion through the critical winter period. Fall rye or winter triticale provides more soil protection because both grow more aggressively in the late fall and early spring compared to winter wheat. Winter wheat may be preferred for grain production but tends to rely on previous crop residue to protect the soil from erosion."

Farmers wanting to grow chickpeas followed by summer fallow in 2002 may want to direct seed a winter cereal after harvest and terminate it next spring as it begins to head out. Trials at Lethbridge compared conventional fallow to a post-harvest fall rye cover crop on wheat stubble. The fall rye was terminated with either tillage or chemical at head emergence in early June. This practice dramatically increased surface residue with similar sub-soil moisture storage to conventional fallow by the end of the fallow period. For chickpeas or other pulse crops, late harvest or herbicide carryover may restrict this practice on some fields and this warrants further investigation.

Decomposition rates for residue from different crop types

Harvest		12 months after harvest			
		Chemfallow		Blade Tillage	
Crop	*lbs/ac*	*% remaining*	*lbs/ac*	*% remaining*	*lbs/ac*
Wheat	4400	44	1940	24	1060
Barley	4800	42	2010	29	1400
Canola	5600	25	1400	16	900
Lentil	3100	17	530	8	250

Blackshaw and Lindwall, Lethbridge Research Centre, AAFC (1992 - 93)

Contact: *Don Wentz* *Rob Dunn*
(403) 381-5862 *(403) 381-5351*

Using organic fertilizers in greenhouse crop production

Many organic fertilizers have been promoted for use in greenhouse crop production.

"A research project, done in cooperation with Tom Rypien from Olds College, on the feasibility of using different organic and certified organic fertilizers has been completed," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton.

In the study, four experiments were carried out to examine the availability of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilizers to grow tomato, cucumber, cabbage and lettuce seedlings.

"It was found that many organic fertilizers could not supply the immediate plant need for phosphorus," adds Mirza. "It was also difficult to find a good certified source of organic nitrogen, which is needed for a fast growth of greenhouse grown plants. In another study, sources of readily available phosphorus were identified."

The study report titled ***Organic Fertilizer Study, Feasibility of their use in Greenhouse Crop Production*** is available by contacting Mirza at (780) 427-1789.

Contact: *Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza*
(780) 415-2303
<mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca>

Conservation of irrigated soils

Soil conservation practices that minimize wind and water erosion must be part of the continuous long-term farm management strategy when growing low residue crops such as potatoes, sugar beets, and dry beans. These crops leave little residue on the soil surface, which increases the potential for soil erosion by wind and water.

"Beans and sugar beets are usually grown on a wide range of soil textures that can erode easily if the soil surface is left bare," says Frank Hecker, head of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's land evaluation unit, Lethbridge. "Potatoes grow best in sandy soil. Sandy soil is more prone to wind erosion, and therefore requires extra precautions against soil erosion. As the area of these crops continues to expand on irrigated land in southern Alberta, so will the challenge to minimize soil erosion by wind and water."

Soils in southern Alberta are particularly susceptible to wind and water erosion when fields are bare after harvest. Wind erosion results in rapid soil loss, removing soil organic matter, nutrients, and herbicides, which in turn can affect air and water quality.

"Water erosion is not as visible as wind erosion," adds Hecker. "Soil erosion by water often occurs during a single event, such as an intense rainfall, when irrigation water is applied at a rate greater than the soil infiltration rate, when irrigation is followed by heavy rainfall, or during spring snow melt. The risk of water erosion is greatest on land under intensive cultivation where slopes are steep, and the threat increases with the slope length and an increase in concentrated flow."

Beneficial management practices (BMP) are cost-effective, practical methods that minimize negative environmental impacts. They are meant to be a practical and affordable approach to conserve soil and water resources without sacrificing productivity. Agricultural BMP are designed to optimize the amount of residue on the soil surface to prevent soil erosion by wind and water.

Beneficial management practices that irrigation farmers can use to protect soil from erosion include:

- maintaining a non-erosive surface by keeping the soil surface rough or cloddy;
- avoiding use of a low residue crop for two or more years in a row unless a fall seeded cover crop is grown between them;
- maintaining plant residue on the soil surface through a minimum number of tillage operations, using equipment that maintains a residue cover on the soil surface, and seeding directly into stubble of the previous crop. Research at the Lethbridge Research Centre has shown that crop residue provides better protection against wind erosion than soil clods;
- using crop rotations (four years or longer) that include a grain and forage;
- using cover crops. Cover crops include fall rye, winter wheat, barley, and oats. Cover crops add organic matter to the soil improving soil tilth and water holding capacity, reduce weed competition, and trap snow in winter that improves soil moisture conditions in the spring. A fall cover crop, such as barley, can be broadcast over a potato field prior to harvest. The seed of the cover crop would be incorporated by the potato harvester as it moves across the field. The cover crop could also be seeded immediately following the potato harvest to take advantage of the moist soil brought to the surface by the harvest operation. A fall cover crop should be planted by mid-September to allow for adequate growth before freeze-up;
- planting field shelter belts and barrier strips for wind protection during critical periods. For example, rows of sorghum could be planted at selected intervals across and along the edge of a field to provide a barrier in the fall after the crop has been harvested; and,
- leaving very highly erodible soils as permanent pasture.

"Farmers in southern Alberta are generally doing a good job of protecting their soils from erosion," says Hecker. "A cover crop of spring barley is often planted following the harvest of potatoes. Fall bedding is a method used by some producers to prepare a field that is to be seeded to potatoes in the spring. This creates a ridged effect that will help to control wind erosion. A dammer-diker is used by some potato growers in southern Alberta to build small dams between hills of potatoes to control water erosion."

Beneficial management practices that reduce soil erosion must be part of the farm management plan for the long-term sustainability of irrigated agriculture, particularly when growing low residue crops such as potatoes, sugar beets, and pulse crops.

Contact:	*Frank Hecker* *(403) 381-5890*	*Brian Hunt* *(403) 223-7908*
	Don Wentz *(403) 381-5862*	*Conny Tomas* *(403) 381-5117*

Reduced rates for Alberta's water pumping program

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is reducing the rates charged to producers for the rental of water pumping equipment by 50 per cent from the standard rental rate for the 2001 pumping season. The Water Pumping Program, offered to producers by Alberta Agriculture, allows Alberta farmers to rent water-pumping equipment during times of water shortage. This is the second consecutive year that producers have been able to access this service at a reduced rate.

"I've spoken with Alberta farmers and they have expressed great concern about water levels throughout the province," says Shirley McClellan, Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "The Water Pumping Program is a vital service, and by offering it at a reduced rate, we hope to provide some relief to those producers affected by water shortages."

In the fall of 2000, dugout levels were below average, and winter precipitation was well below normal across most of Alberta. The fee reduction is aimed at assisting producers with the cost of pumping water due to scarcity of water supplies.

At the reduced rate, Alberta producers can rent six- or eight-inch aluminum pipe and pumps from Alberta Agriculture to fill dugouts from local water sources. Full-time producers experiencing water shortages for domestic and livestock use have priority for equipment use. A typical unit of equipment consists of a PTO driven water pump and one mile of six-inch aluminum pipe (30-foot sections) on a trailer. This would cost the producer $250 plus GST for the delivered unit for the initial 48 hour period. Equipment for longer distance jobs can be accessed at reduced rates depending on availability. Renters must provide the tractor power, a five-person crew for layout and pickup, and any permits or approvals required for road crossings or water source access.

"2000 was a very busy year and the same is expected this year," says Murray Tenove, water quality engineer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Last year, the pumping equipment fleet size was increased by one third and this will certainly help this year's situation. Still, Alberta farmers would be well advised to apply for use of the equipment early. Even if the equipment won't be needed for a couple of months, don't wait until the last minute. This is especially true for multi-mile pumping projects."

Producers can apply through any Alberta Agriculture district office, but are reminded that the program wraps up on November 15. A cheque equal to the estimated cost of the project is required at that time as a deposit.

It is expected that more producers will be trying to get water from streams, lakes and rivers, this year. It is important they remember that a Temporary Diversion License (TDL) is required for filling dugouts from these water sources.

"Many of Alberta's streams, lakes and rivers could be low this year as well," adds Tenove. "Applying for a TDL early will give Alberta Environment extra time to do its job. Typically, two to three days are needed to turn around an application if it is straight-forward."

To obtain information and application forms for the program, producers can contact their local Alberta Agriculture district office or Dugout Water Pumping dispatch location.

Information about the Water Pumping Program is also available on the AAFRD website at:
www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/engineering/water

Agricultural Water Specialists can also be contacted through these offices to provide recommendations on constructing or maintaining a safe and secure water supply.

Dugout Water Pumping dispatch locations:

Lethbridge
Agriculture Centre
100, 5401 - 1st Ave. South
Lethbridge, AB T1J 4V6
(403) 381-5112

Red Deer
Provincial Building
Room 301, 4920 - 51 St.
Red Deer, AB T4N 6K8
(403) 340-5322

Airdrie
Agriculture Centre
Bag Service #1
Airdrie, AB T4B 2C1
(403) 948-8503

Vermilion
Provincial Building
Box 24, 4701 - 52 St.
Vermilion, AB T9X 1J9
(780) 853-8114

Barrhead
Provincial Building
Box 4560, 6203 - 49 St.
Barrhead, AB T7N 1A4
(780) 674-8256

Fairview
Provincial Building
Box 159, 10209 - 109 St.
Fairview, AB T0H 1L0
(780) 835-2291

Contact: Murray Tenove
(780) 427-2181

Rural Alberta Showcase 2001

Often, what is heard about rural Alberta isn't positive. Some rural communities are losing schools, elevators and other services, and many people involved in farming are struggling financially. But, there are many positive things happening in rural Alberta, too. The Bashaw Agricultural Society is hosting an event designed to showcase and share these successes. ***Rural Alberta Showcase*** is being held on April 20 and 21, 2001 at the Bashaw Recreation Centre and the Bashaw Community Centre.

"*Rural Alberta Showcase* has three main activities: a community workshop, a trade show with a difference and a celebration evening," says Marian Williams, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Camrose.

On April 20, *Twenty Clues to Rural Community Survival*, a community workshop, will be presented by the Heartland Centre for Leadership Development. The Heartland Centre conducts in-depth case studies of small towns and rural communities that are surviving against the odds - towns that are off the beaten path, too small, over dependent on agriculture or are threatened in some other way by changes in population or economic realities.

"The profiles of many of these thriving communities show that what local people say and do is more important than the socio-economic factors that community leaders can do little about," says Williams. "These towns are surviving because they embrace change, not shrink from it, and because they know the future is in the hands of the people who live there. The workshop will help community leaders, businesses and organizations learn to find opportunities where others may see only threats."

The trade show portion of the event is open to Alberta-based independent businesses that provide a service or produce a product. The cost of exhibiting is very reasonable to allow small businesses the opportunity to attend. The trade show will help participating businesses increase their network of suppliers and distributors, as well as develop new customers. The Showcase committee hosts an exhibitors' breakfast where some of these contacts can be developed. Dixie Hodgson, owner of Kananaskis Food Processors and member of the Central Alberta Networking Group, will discuss how this group supports the members and encourages networking. Anyone interested in exhibiting at the trade show should contact the Bashaw Ag Society for an exhibitor package.

"April 20th will be a celebration of living in rural Alberta, celebrating successes in rural Alberta," adds Williams. "The evening is open to everyone and is a great opportunity to get together with other rural Albertans. The theme this year is Mexican, so bring a sombrero or a poncho."

The first Annual Cheeseburger Festival is being held in Bashaw in conjunction with Rural Alberta Showcase on April 21st. Community groups have a variety of activities planned, including a bridge tournament, a cheese burger eating contest and a *Ugly Truck* contest. And of course, there will be cheeseburgers, featuring local cheese and beef, to enjoy. As well, a consignment machinery auction will be held at the Bashaw Ag Grounds.

For more information about Rural Alberta Showcase or the Cheeseburger Festival, contact the Bashaw Agricultural Society at (780)372-3648 or e-mail <agsoc@cable-lynx.net>.

Contact: Marian Williams
(780) 679-1210

Towards a market focus: value chains for competitive advantage

Agriculture, like other industries, faces a number of challenges ranging from increasing competition and decreasing margins, to growing consumer sophistication and changing demands. Value chains are one tool that agricultural businesses can use for developing a more effective response to the marketplace.

"Value chains are consumer or market driven, rather than commodity or supply driven," says Lori-Jo Graham, business development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "The main purpose of chains is meeting a specific market opportunity for the long-term benefit of all parties. A value chain is the combined activities of primary production, processing, packaging, transportation, distribution and marketing. This may range from enterprises within a single business to a series of businesses working together to meet a specific opportunity."

The value chain concept is built on relationships and communication, with vision, commitment, trust and respect as key components. Links of the chain work together to address consumer needs, drive out unnecessary costs, ensure the continuous supply of safe, high-quality food products, and increase value along the entire chain. Members of the value chain may not necessarily realize higher prices for their products, but are very likely to realize benefits from stabilizing prices, and non-price issues such as efficient consumer response, long-term contracts, guaranteed supply and reduced inventory levels.

In Alberta, there are examples of value-chain development in various sectors. The new Global Forage Alliance, a group of commonly linked companies engaged in forage exports, has developed a value chain approach in order to improve efficiencies and respond quickly to the changing needs of the

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market. In the grain industry, an example of a value chain initiative is the Canadian Wheat Board's Identity Preserved Wheat Program and Warburton's Ltd. (independent bakery) in the UK. There are other opportunities including specialty canola for specific oil profiles, processing specifics, organic products and others.

In the agri-food processing area, there are several examples ranging from potatoes, beef and chicken to food service specialty products. Two major potato processing plants near Lethbridge, that together produce approximately two million pounds of frozen French fries daily, operate through value chain links, including the growing, processing, packaging and sales functions. The Alberta Chicken Producers have successfully established a value chain involving hatcheries, producers, processors and a customer, Swiss Chalet.

For the beef industry, value-based marketing (VBM) and new alliances are providing opportunities for producers to develop value chain links. Some of the feedlots offering VBM programs include Western Feedlots, XL Beef, Cargill BEEFWorks and BeefNet. The Canadian Angus Beef program has been available in a limited number of restaurants since 1993 and continues to expand. A new initiative recently launched is the Highland Premium Alberta Beef Alliance. It is developing a high-quality, premium product that is fully supported by an information-based quality control system or value chain.

"In other speciality markets, such as food service, private label, specialty food and organic retail outlets, several value chain links are developing in order to provide products that meet strict consumer specifications and demand," says Graham. There are opportunities, ranging from small niche markets to large volume markets, for agriculture producers of any size to compete successfully through market collaboration."

These types of business collaborations are not always simple and easy to develop. They do require the willingness to commit to a common vision, a significant investment of resources, trust, flexibility and the ability to motivate others. However, they do pay. Increasing profitability while reducing risk is the ultimate reward of every successful value chain.

This is article eight of a 10-part series on Moving Towards a Market Focus. Previous articles in the series are available on the Alberta Agriculture website at: <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>

Contact:	*Lori-Jo Graham* *(403) 556-4244*	*Kathy Lowther* *(403) 948-8537*
	Laura Lee Billings *(403) 443-8522*	*Margurite Thiessen* *(780) 836-3351*

2001 IVOMEC 4-H scholarship challenge

Merial Canada is seeking Canadian 4-H members for the 2001 IVOMEC Scholarship Challenge. Candidates will be asked to discuss cutting-edge issues facing the livestock industry. Winners will qualify for $1,000 IVOMEC Scholarships to be awarded in June 2001.

"This year, 4-H members are asked to address the debate about tracking individual animals back to their farms of origin," said Jacinthe Moreau, marketing manager for Merial Canada. "This issue is of great importance in agriculture. Consumers find comfort in food quality with tracking programs. As recently seen in the United Kingdom, it can be an important part of monitoring animal health and animal movement. Trace, however, does add new costs and burdens for producers. It is an interesting and stimulating topic for our 2001 4-H Youth Scholarship contest."

Interested 4-H members can download an application form from the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/4h>. The submission deadline is May 15, 2001.

When 2001 funds are awarded, a total of 200 4-H youth in Canada will have received scholarships in the program.

"This is an investment in the next generation of farm leadership," said Dr. Stewart Bauck, director of Merial Canada. "Our work together supports Canadian youth as they prepare to meet new challenges facing agriculture and food production. We are pleased to sponsor the 4-H movement with all IVOMEC brand products."

The Canadian 4-H Council is a not-for-profit agency that coordinates all national 4-H activities in Canada. Founded in 1933, it offers conferences, exchanges, scholarships, and international travel opportunities to thousands of 4-H members and leaders across the country. The Canadian 4-H Council raises awareness of the 4-H program through national public relations initiatives.

For further information on this scholarship program, contact Moreau at (514) 457-1555, ext. 6021, or Chris Forrest, Canadian 4-H Council, (613) 234-4448, ext. 27.

For more information on other 4-H scholarships, contact Betty Grudnizki (780) 427-4499.

Contact:	*Jacinthe Moreau*	*(514) 457-1555, ext. 6021*
	Chris Forrest	*(613) 234-4448, ext. 27*

Agri-News Briefs

Food Safety Info Line ready for Albertan's Easter questions

Is it safe to eat Easter eggs after decorating them? How long should I heat my holiday ham? Can I stuff a chicken or turkey the day before cooking it? What's the best way to wash fresh fruits and vegetables? Consumers can get up-to-date, science-based answers to food safety questions and concerns about spring and Easter foods by calling the toll-free Food Safety Info Line. The toll-free number is 1-800-892-8333. The Food Safety Info Line is staffed by professional home economists prepared to answer questions about food handling, preparation and storage, food production, packaging and labeling, government regulations and consumer protection, agricultural practices such as pesticides and organic foods, emerging issues including irradiation and biotechnology. The consumer hot line is answered Monday through Friday. Messages received by 4:00 p.m. MDT are returned the same day. The Food Safety Info Line is a Calgary-based, not-for-profit organization that provides western consumers with direct access to current, credible food safety information, science based information resources and public education. For further information, contact Jane Carlyle (403) 287-0098.

Ag and Food Science Scholarship awarded

A scholarship established in the Faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics at the University of Alberta, has been awarded to Lise Luppens, a nutritional sciences student. The annual scholarship, sponsored by the Special Crops Product Team of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and C.V. Technologies Inc., is awarded to a student who has demonstrated superior academic achievements and is entering the third or fourth year of a degree program majoring in agriculture or nutrition and food science, with an interest in production or use of special crops or nutraceuticals and functional foods of plant origin. The recipient of the $1,250 per annum scholarship is selected on the basis of academic standing. "This scholarship is very helpful in a time of rising tuition costs," says Luppens. "The financial assistance will be most beneficial in offsetting additional expenses incurred by my participation in an upcoming exchange between the University of Alberta and the University of Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia." Luppens is taking part in this exchange to gain a more international perspective on human nutrition. For further information, contact Stan Blade, director of Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton, (780) 415-2311.

Agroforestry conference

An agroforestry conference is being held on August 13 to 15, 2001 in Regina, Saskatchewan. The conference will focus on agroforestry as it relates to changes in social and economic patterns, including technology change, the agricultural economy, demand and supply of wood products. It will also address on the role of agroforestry in the environment including the changing physical climate due to global warming. More information is available on the internet at <http://www.agr.ca/pfra/aftappfa.htm>. Information is also available by contacting Toso Bozic, sustainable woodlot specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Barrhead, (780) 674-8213.

FGSA seeking executive director

The Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) is seeking a highly motivated and self-directed person to fill the position of executive director. The FGSA is dedicated to the production and marketing of native prairie fruits such as saskatoons, wild black cherries and currants. It represents Society members and the industry and acts as liaison with government agencies and related associations. Some of the responsibilities of the executive director include promoting the use of saskatoons, wild black cherries and currants to the public and encouraging chefs to use these products in promoting a regional food experience. The executive director will work to increase the society's membership, advance knowledge of the industry to member growers, assist in promoting products, and encourage research by various institutions to enhance the production, quality, markets and cuisine of native fruits. This is a one-year renewable contract subject to performance and available funding. For complete information on the position and requirements, contact Garnett Eyjolfsson, Secretary, Fruit Growers Society of Alberta, 403-742-5742. Applications should be submitted to Garnett Eyjolfsson, attention executive director position, by e-mail to <orchard@telusplanet.net>, by fax to 403-742-4808, or by mail to Box 1471, Stettler, AB T0C 2L0. Competition will close upon the selection of a suitable candidate.

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Agri-News

April 23, 2001

Farmers can save money on fuel

Increased fuel prices promise to chew at already tightening producer margins. Engineers at the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's AgTech Centre in Lethbridge say farmers can increase their tractor's fuel efficiency this spring by considering five key areas affecting fuel consumption.

"Fuel efficiency varies depending on the type of equipment, travel speed and numerous other factors," says Reed Turner, an engineer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's AgTech Centre, Lethbridge. "One of the crucial factors is tire pressure. A recent study conducted at the Centre shows correct tire pressure significantly reduces fuel consumption and time in the field. Reduced power delivery, decreased traction, uneven tread wear and soil rutting result when tires are over-inflated."

Under-inflated tires increase sidewall wear and raise the risk of sidebuckling and rim slip occurrences and these are not conducive to fuel efficiency.

"Tires should be inflated to the lowest correct level for a particular load as outlined in the manufacturer's tire inflation tables. By using the correct tire inflation pressure for the load, a little more of the tire sits on the ground, significantly increasing the power delivery efficiency and decreasing fuel consumption," explains Turner.

Another way to save on fuel is to put off buying those new tires for another year, if the old ones are still structurally sound and can still do the job. Long lugs are great for squeezing out the mud in wet conditions, but under good traction conditions, longer lugs just use more energy.

Fuel efficiency is also affected by other tire factors including overloading, tire type and number of tires used. Turner recommends radials over bias-ply tires, as AgTech Centre and other studies show radials improve traction by six per cent.

Using duals and triples under normal field conditions can also decrease fuel efficiency.

"For ideal tractor efficiency, match the tractor's power to the load being pulled," says Turner. "If that can't be done, farmers have another option to save on fuel while they're in the field. When a load requires less than 70 per cent of the tractor's power, a farmer can save fuel by shifting to a higher gear and slowing engine rpm to maintain the desired speed."

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

This practice is sometimes referred to as Gear Up, Throttle Back (GUTB). In GUTB mode, the engine is loaded correctly, bringing it back to the 'sweet spot' where fuel is used most efficiently.

"Weighting the tractor for fuel efficiency is also key. Most farmers reach the upper limits of their tractor's power only 15 to 20 per cent of the time, making it essential to weight (ballast) the tractor for typical conditions instead of maximum needs," says Turner.

Farmers usually ballast their tractor for the worst case scenario; for example, two weeks of heavy fieldwork. But it's more efficient to ballast for the typical loads pulled the rest of the year.

Over-ballasted tractors will probably feel sluggish and on top of burning more fuel than they should, may have premature drive-train problems. An under-ballasted tractor wears tire tread faster while never delivering full power to the drawbar. Fuel is wasted because of the extra wheel revolutions to travel the same distance.

"Finally, farmers should use the right fuel for the season," says Turner. "Winter fuel is blended lighter, delivering less energy per litre, so it shouldn't be used in the summer.

"The goal is to get your tractor delivering optimal power while consuming the least amount of fuel. These are simple procedures, but they can add up to substantial savings."

For more information or to get the April 2001 edition of the *AgTech Innovator* that outlines these and other tips for saving fuel, contact the AgTech Centre at (403) 329-1212 or fax: (403) 328-5562.

Contact: *Reed Turner*
(403) 329-1212
reed.turner@gov.ab.ca
Rick Atkins
(403) 329-1212
rick.atkins@gov.ab.ca

Insect pest forecast 2001

Insect pests have caused substantial crop losses to Alberta producers in recent years. Forecasts and crop scouting can be instrumental for enabling farmers to respond quickly in the event of an outbreak. For 2001, the insects most likely to cause crop damage are flea beetles, wheat midge, cabbage seedpod weevil, Lygus bugs and glassy cutworm.

"In late summer of 2000, enormous numbers of flea beetles were observed feeding on maturing canola pods in the southern and central regions of the province," says Lloyd Dosdall, research entomologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "These pests overwinter in shelterbelts and emerge in spring to feed on canola seedlings. High numbers in late summer of 2000 are an indication that populations will be high in the spring of 2001. Canola growers should be prepared to protect their crops from these pests."

For many years, growers have minimized flea beetle damage by planting seed treated with lindane (Vitavax rs®), a systemic insecticide applied as a seed treatment that effectively protects canola crops from flea beetles in most regions of Alberta. This will be the final year in which lindane will be available, because the product is being voluntarily withdrawn from the market. Replacement products for lindane have been registered, but are likely to cost two to three times as much. Growers should experiment with ways to reduce their insecticide inputs. Planting seed treated with insecticide around the edges of fields may effectively control flea beetles because they usually move inwards from field edges to the more central regions of crops. Reducing tillage can also reduce flea beetle damage. Flea beetles prefer the warm, dry soil conditions associated with conventional tillage and avoid the cool, moist conditions that occur in zero or minimum till systems.

"Although the orange wheat blossom midge has been a severe pest of wheat in Saskatchewan and Manitoba for many years, it was only in 2000 that the first insecticide applications were made in Alberta for wheat midge control," says Dosdall. "Forecasts for 2001 that were developed from surveys of overwintering larval cocoons, show very high wheat midge numbers in Alberta from Lloydminster east nearly to Edmonton and south to Paradise Valley and Wainwright. In view of this increased risk to crops, growers in central Alberta are urged to monitor wheat fields during the susceptible period from the time when wheat heads emerge from the boot until flowering begins. An insecticide application is recommended when the crop is heading and there is at least one adult midge on every four to five wheat heads. To maintain optimum grade of wheat, insecticide should be used when there is one adult midge for every eight to 10 heads."

The cabbage seedpod weevil continues to be a serious threat to the economical production of canola in southern Alberta. The severe drought experienced in southern Alberta in 2000 hampered development of cabbage seedpod weevil in canola and, as a result, there were fewer adults overwintering than in 1999. In addition, the minimal snow cover during most of the winter would have further reduced the population because adults overwintering beneath the soil surface were less protected from severe temperatures.

"Although cabbage seedpod weevil numbers may not be as great this year, even with low numbers this pest is capable of causing much damage to canola," adds Dosdall. "Adults migrate to canola in vast numbers when most plants are in bud, and they feed on buds to extract pollen. This leaves many buds blasted, and they then wither and die. Adults lay eggs into developing pods, and the larvae feed on seeds within the pods.

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When adults of the new generation emerge in late summer, they puncture canola pods to feed on immature seeds and destroy many more seeds in the process."

In both 1999 and 2000, because there are no insecticides currently registered for use against this pest in Canada, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development obtained emergency registration for deltamethrin to control weevil infestations. If adult numbers are high in southern Alberta later this spring, the department will again seek emergency registration for an effective insecticide.

Growers should use sweep nets to monitor their canola crops for adult weevils, beginning at the bud stage, and consider spraying when weevil populations average three to four adults per sweep net sample or higher.

"Lygus bugs are a serious concern in 2001," says Dosdall. "Although very little insecticide was sprayed in Alberta to control these pests in 2000, Lygus bug populations can increase rapidly if conditions are suitable. For example, an early, warm growing season could enable Lygus to complete an additional generation beyond what they could normally achieve. If so, the possibility exists for a renewed threat by these pests that could lead to extensive insecticide applications."

To prevent dangerous surprises by Lygus bugs, canola growers should monitor their crops in the bud and bolting stages, because this is the time when plants are most attractive to egg-laying adults. Populations at bud are a good indicator of infestation levels later in the season.

In 2000, a massive outbreak of glassy cutworm occurred throughout the Peace River region, and producers in this area should be vigilant to avert possible crop losses from this pest in 2001.

"Glassy cutworm larvae can attack pasture grass and grass seed crops such as fescue and timothy. This pest is more difficult to control with insecticide than most other cutworms because larvae rarely emerge above ground to feed, and remain in the crown region of the plant where it is difficult for pesticide to penetrate," says Dosdall. "Late in the season in 2000, monitoring was done to assess the overwintering population of glassy cutworm and it was found that many individuals were parasitized. It is probable that natural enemies will keep infestation levels of glassy cutworm below those of the 2000 field season, but nevertheless, growers should monitor grass seed crops and pastures so that the risk level in their areas can be ascertained."

Contact: Lloyd Dosdall
(780) 422-4911

Elm pruning ban in Alberta now in effect

The annual elm pruning ban is in effect between April 1 and September 30. A pruning ban is required because the smaller European elm bark beetle (SEEBB) and the native elm bark beetle (NEBB), vectors of the Dutch elm disease (DED), are most active during this period. These beetles are attracted to the sap scent given off by the open wound after an elm has been pruned. Beetles can be carrying the fungal spores on their bodies, therefore spreading the disease.

"Pruning of elm trees in Alberta must only be done between October 1 and March 31 of the following year," says Janet Feddes-Calpas, provincial DED program coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "Several municipalities already have an elm pruning bylaw in place that results in a fine if you prune an elm after March 31. DED, SEEBB and the NEBB are declared pests under the Alberta legislation, making it illegal to transport or store elm firewood. All pruned elm wood must be burned or buried to prevent the possible spread of DED."

Alberta Agriculture's Dutch Elm Disease Prevention Program, along with the larger municipalities, has monitored for the SEEBB and the NEBB, since 1978. Since then, beetle monitoring program has been an important component to DED prevention programs and is done to determine if either vector is in the province. In 2000, 470 sites in the province, including municipalities, nurseries, provincial parks and all ports-of-entry, were monitored for the beetles. SEEBBs were again captured in Edmonton, Calgary and Medicine Hat, but in much lower numbers than in previous years. New municipalities to capture beetles were Killam and Lloydminster. No NEBBs were found in the province.

"The SEEBBs have been found on a recurring basis since 1994 in Calgary, 1995 in Edmonton and 1998 in Medicine Hat," says Feddes-Calpas. "In the past, other locations to find SEEBBs were Strathcona County, Red Deer, Vauxhall, High River, St. Albert, Balzac, and Coutts."

Alberta needs to stay diligent in the fight against DED. Alberta is one of the few places in the world with large populations of American elm trees that are free from the scourge of this fatal disease. The elm trees in Alberta are valued at more than $500 million. Alberta's DED-free status is in large partly due to the hard work done by the Alberta Agriculture DED Prevention Program and the Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED). Alberta can not afford to lose its elm trees!

For more information on DED or the program, contact the Dutch Elm Disease Hotline by dialing toll free 310-0000 and then asking for 362-1337. Information is also available on the Alberta Agriculture Internet site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ded>.

Contact: Janet Feddes-Calpas (403) 362-1337

Summer Farm Employment Program applications

The Summer Farm Employment Program (SFEP) will run again in 2001.

"SFEP provides Alberta's youth the opportunity to gain farm work experience as part of Alberta's Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP)," says Christine Paproski, program consultant with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Since the program began in 1972, it has helped more than 37,500 young people learn about career opportunities in farming."

Through the program, full-time farmers receive assistance to hire young Albertans from July 1 to August 31. The Alberta government pays up to half of the employee's monthly wage, to a maximum of $375 per month.

"Prospective employees must be unemployed, between 15 and 24 years of age, and must not be a relative of the employer," says Paproski. "Youth work a minimum of 30 hours per week and must be paid at least the provincial minimum wage, which is $5.90 per hour."

Up to 350 young people will be accepted into the 2001 program. Application forms are processed on a first-come, first-served basis and employers and employees must apply together.

Application forms and program guidelines for SFEP will be available on April 30, 2001 from Alberta Agriculture field service offices. Application forms will be accepted until May 31, 2001 or until all program funds are committed, whichever comes first.

"High school students participating in the SFEP who are interested in a career in agriculture may also want to consider the Green Certificate Farm Training Program (GCP) as a way to enhance their learning and gain credits," says Sheila Hart, communications coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "Youth interested in earning high school credits and certification should consult with their school counselor or contact the GCP at (780) 427-2171."

Contact: *Christine Paproski*
(780) 427-3124
Sheila Hart
(780) 427-4309

Towards a market focus: product life cycles

Products go through phases as they age in the market place. This is more readily seen in consumer goods than in basic commodities, such as wheat, but the cycles exist for products nonetheless. The basic concept behind life cycles is that most products exist as one of many solutions to a need. Over time, the need may change or better solutions may be offered, so the demand for the product may change.

"There are a few simple considerations in the life cycle," says Doug Walkey, market specialist for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "Product lives are limited. For example, the market for buggy whips is much more limited today than it was 150 years ago. A market for buggy whips still exists, however, the number sold is much smaller and the segment of the population buying them is much narrower."

Products go through a series of stages in the cycle, each with different opportunities and problems. Profits will also change through each stage, and promotion and investment will vary. Sometimes lifecycles are "stepped" as the product evolves. Chicken is a good example of how products mature, then re-enter the growth stage as new packaging and processing makes new demand for the product.

"The basic stages are introduction, growth, maturity and decline," says Walkey. "The introduction phase has slow growth and usually limited profit potential. Investment is needed to get the product established and attract clients. Introduction phases usually face the challenge of creating a market. It can be difficult to convince buyers they need an unfamiliar product or service."

The growth stage is marked by faster growth, increasing sales and new customers. The product has been refined and profit margins are beginning to grow. Word of mouth becomes a factor in increased sales. The growth stage can be lengthened into a series of humps as new market sectors or export markets are entered. Investment often shifts from production capacity to promotion and market development in this stage. Competition begins to appear now from copy-cat products.

Maturity sees growth slow and possibly begin to falter. The product is accepted and known by most likely buyers. Profits tend to be stable or start to decline as sales stagnate. Promotion is essential to maintain market share, and competition on price alone becomes common. It is at this stage that profits are likely to be used to repay the development expenses and the investors. The maturity phase may be any length from months to many decades depending on the product, its niche and its competitors.

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Finally, the decline stage sees sales dwindle and profits fall. Often these products are milked for any value remaining in them, as little new development or advertising are invested. The income from these products is often channeled to promote and develop new products in the introduction and growth phases.

"Recognizing where a product or service fits into the life cycle is important," adds Walkey. "For example, the newest product may be competing directly with an established mature product from a competitor. The strategies and investment devoted to the product must be appropriate for a mature market, or both resources and opportunities may be wasted."

For more information on product life cycles, contact the local business development specialists, or marketing consultants. Information is also available by contacting the local district office and asking for Walkey at (403) 782-3301 or e-mail <doug.walkey@gov.ab.ca>.

This is article nine of a 10 part series on Moving Towards a Market Focus. If you'd like to read the other articles in the series as they are released visit Ropin the Web, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Internet site, at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

Contact: *Doug Walkey*
(403) 782-3301

Is your farm a tourist destination?

Farm families are well known for their hospitality. The question is, can that hospitality be turned into a profitable business? Agri-tourism in Alberta is an emerging industry, responding to a growing demand for access to farm and ranch lifestyles and products. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs defines agri-tourism as 'the economic activity that occurs when people link travel with agricultural products, services or experiences'.

"The Canadian travelling public is increasingly interested in spending a day on a farm or touring the countryside to attend rural events," says Linda Hawk, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Medicine Hat. "They want to experience the rural lifestyle first-hand and get a better grasp on how and where their food is produced. International visitors are also interested in accessing rural settings and experiencing the great Canadian outdoors."

Agri-tourism ventures vary from simple pick-your-own vegetables and berries to organized events that charge admission. If considering agri-tourism as a potential business, the initial strategies should include a critical assessment of your operation and skills, along with careful background research on the opportunities.

Questions to discuss with family members and partners include:

- What does the farm have to offer?
- Do we have any products to sell to visitors or will we simply be showing them the operation, or hosting them overnight?
- Are there any other attractions in the area that would interest visitors?
- Do we want people on our property on a regular basis?
- Do we enjoy people?
- Are we prepared to do the extra work and make the necessary renovations or additions to the facilities?

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development recently released three new factsheets focusing on the agri-tourism industry: ***Country Vacation Enterprise*** (Agdex # 888-2), ***Rural Festivals and Special Events*** (Agdex # 888-3), and ***Providing Farm Tours*** (Agdex # 888-4). These factsheets provide information on the agri-tourism industry, regulatory considerations, operations, marketing and market focus, and financial and economic issues. They also provide a list of other references along with contact people in the industry.

To obtain a copy of any of these new resources, contact the nearest Alberta Agriculture district office or check the Alberta Agriculture website <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Linda Hawk*
(403) 529-3616

Province's best 4-H speaker

Kelsey MacMillan's speech on the topic ***How do you picture rural Alberta in the year 2025***, earned her the title as Alberta's best 4-H public speaker in 2001.

"MacMillan, a member of the Irma 4-H Beef Club, was one of 14 top 4-H'ers who qualified for the recent competition in Wetaskiwin. All 14 had to speak at a minimum of three levels of competition to reach the provincial finals," says Kathy Hougham, provincial 4-H communication development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Each finalist had one week to research and prepare a four- to six-minute speech on the topic. MacMillan's speech *Imagine the Possibilities*, plus her impromptu speech on *My most memorable 4-H experience* won her first place."

In second place was Lisa Gruber from the Tomahawk 4-H Beef Club. Kyle Kootstra from the Lacombe 4-H Dairy Club received third place honours.

The 2001 Provincial 4-H Public Speaking Finals were sponsored by Agrium. "The speakers all exhibited a high level of skill and poise," says Jennifer Barber, communication

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coordinator with Agrium. "The communication skills the speakers have learned in 4-H will serve them well in their careers and personal lives."

MacMillan will travel to Toronto in November 2001 to compete in the Young Speakers for Agriculture Competition. Her travel to the competition will be sponsored by the agricultural radio program, Agritalk with Jim Fisher, and the Alberta Friends of National Public Speaking.

Contact: *Kathy Hougham*
(780) 422-4583

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Agri-News Briefs

Arbor Day

On May 3th, Arbor Day will be celebrated across the province. Many communities have special events scheduled for this special tree planting day. To help grade one students realize the importance and beautification value of trees, they will be presented with a tree seedling to plant. Seedlings are supplied by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Alberta Environmental Protection. Arbor Day in Alberta dates back to 1884, and is celebrated annually on the first Thursday of May. It was started by Mr. J. Sterling Morton. In 1864, Morton and his wife Caroline, moved from Michigan to settle in Nebraska. Instead of the forests they had known back home, they found an endless sea of grass. The two of them quickly set about planting trees and encouraged their neighbors to do the same. In 1872, Morton proposed to the Nebraska Board of Agriculture that a holiday be set aside for tree planting. His proposal was adopted and the idea soon spread across America. On the first Abor Day more than a million trees were planted in Nebraska. By 1884, Canada began celebrating Arbor Day and, on May 10, 1893, the Council of the North West Territories officially recognized Arbor Day. In those days, school children had a holiday on this special day and offices and stores were closed. For many Canadians, Arbor Day brings back rich memories. More than a holiday; it was a day with a high practical purpose, a day when millions of young trees were planted on school yards, parks, boulevards and around homes. As older people will verify, many stately trees growing today began as Arbor Day seedlings. Morton loved trees for their own sake, for their beauty and for the creation of an enjoyable environment. Help Morton's dream continue, plant a tree on Arbor Day!

Irrigation in Alberta

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has recently revised and printed the ***Irrigation in Alberta*** (Agdex #560-1) publication. Some 600,000 hectares (1,482,600 acres) of land in the province receive water through irrigation. It is estimated that directly and indirectly, irrigation adds about 35,000 jobs and more than $940 million dollars a year to the provincial economy. The publication describes Alberta's irrigation system, development and diversification made possible by the system and the 13 irrigation districts in the province. Different methods of getting water to crops and the various benefits realized by irrigation. Copies of the booklet are available free of charge from the Publications Office, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, and from all Alberta Agriculture regional advisory service offices.

Outstanding young farmers

Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers Program (OYF) promotes the tremendous contribution of agriculture to the country. OYF is designed to recognize farm couples that exemplify excellence in their profession. Nominees are judged according to: progress made in their agriculture career, environmental enhancement, crop and livestock production history and contributions to the well being of the community, province and nation. To qualify, a farmer or farm couple must be between 18 and 39 years of age and be farm operators, deriving a minimum of two-thirds of their family income from farming. Nominations are being accepted until April 30, 2001. Nominations can be made by calling toll free 1-866-739-2233.

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Agri-News

April 30, 2001

Direct assistance for farmers in Budget 2001

- Budget 2001 includes over $250 million in new funding toward a direct assistance program for provincial producers.
- $17 million allocated for the extension of winter natural gas rebates over the summer months to assist irrigation farmers and alfalfa processors.
- A 50 per cent reduction in rental rates for the Emergency Water Pumping Program.
- $20.7 million committed for a 30 per cent crop insurance premium reduction.
- Increase of $2 million for food safety programs.

Assistance for the agriculture industry is a focus of Budget 2001. The Budget contains increases for programs to assist the industry with a variety of issues including escalating costs, decreasing commodity prices and food safety.

"Our agriculture community is faced with numerous difficulties over input costs, world prices for products and the potential for weather problems," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Budget 2001 dollars will help us deal with the immediate concerns so we can focus on longer term solutions for sustainability in our agriculture industry."

Following up on the federal assistance package for farmers announced in March 2001, the Alberta government will provide provincial funding on top of the $126.8 million from the federal government. This funding will go toward a direct assistance program for Alberta producers. Details about the direct assistance program will be released shortly.

Budget 2001 also allocates $17 million to extend the winter natural gas rebate program for the province's irrigation farmers and alfalfa processors for the period when natural gas usage is essential for their business. The program is similar to the rebate program offered over the winter months to other natural gas consumers. Bill 1, *The Natural Gas Price Protection Act*, will also assist the agriculture industry at times when natural gas prices are higher than expected.

With a water shortage for the upcoming crop year, Budget 2001 provides for a 50 per cent reduction in the Emergency Water Pumping program rental rates. The province is also reviewing the options available to assist the agriculture industry in the case of drought.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Related to preparing for difficult weather circumstances, Budget 2001 includes a 30 per cent reduction in crop insurance premiums, helping to ensure producers can take advantage of available risk management tools.

Recognizing the affect of other issues such as food safety on the viability of the industry and the need for vigilance related to the health of Albertans, Budget 2001 includes a $2 million increase for food safety programs. These programs are focused on developing safe food production protocols for all contributors, from the farm to the consumer, and documenting the safety of our food supply through surveillance and monitoring activities.

"We are looking at assisting farmers in a number of ways," says McClellan. "We recognize the important contribution agriculture and food makes to the province and the difficult issues they face. The programs are a bridge to the longer-term solutions that we are working with industry to develop through the Ag Summit 2000 process. Through these efforts, I know we can assist the industry to remain one of the cornerstones of our economy."

Contact: *Janice Harrington*
Director of Communications
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

Charlotte Moran
Director of Communications
Energy
(780) 422-3667

Nitrogen fertilizers – the biggest bang for the buck

The allocation of limited money resources in a production decision is important to the farm manager. When adding resources to a production process, it is hoped that the resources added will bring increased yields. It then must be determined when adding more resources no longer results in sufficient increase to warrant the expenditure. This is the principle of diminishing returns.

In agriculture, revenue is obtained in the future where there is uncertainty about the actual outcome (yields, prices, grades). When prices of resources are relatively high (for example, nitrogen fertilizer this spring) it will not pay to use as much as when prices are lower. Similarly, when prices of goods sold are higher, it will pay to use more inputs than when prices are lower.

"A valuable tool to assist input decision making is the Alberta Farm Fertilizer Information and Recommendation Manager (AFFIRM). It can be downloaded from the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site," says George Rock, farm management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Leduc.

"AFFIRM is an interactive, user-friendly system that allows the user to select a crop, identify the field's agro-climatic region, identify soil and crop management practices and enter soil test results from a laboratory report into the model," adds Roger Andreiuk, cereal and oilseed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Leduc. "In addition, the model requires values for fertilizer costs and an expected grain value. The model is designed to access a series of small databases to retrieve various coefficients based on the information entered by the user. AFFIRM makes it possible to get custom recommendations for a farm."

In Table 1, an example from AFFIRM is summarized for the black soil zone at three levels of growing season precipitation for four crops. Assume nitrogen fertilizer costs $0.42 per pound of actual N and expected prices for #3 Hard Red Spring (HRS) wheat, Canada Prairie Spring Wheat (CPS), Feed Barley and Canola are $3.60, $3.40, $2.25 and $6.00 per bushel respectively. Optimally, farmers would apply N fertilizer until the added cost of 10 lbs/ac of N equaled the extra value of the product. This would mean that the $4.20 marginal value cost (MVC) of fertilizer would equal the $4.20 marginal product of grain (MFP). Decisions, however, must be guided by reality. Production or return must be greater than cost. For this example, assume a farmer desires a two to one ratio of increased crop value for each 10 pound increase in N fertilizer cost applied or MVP = $8.40 and MFC = $4.20.

Table 1 – predicted yield (bushels per acre) at moisture level and N rate per acre for low, medium and high growing season precipitation

Crop Yield	Soil Moisture and Corresponding N Application Rate (lbs./acre)					
	Low (bu)	N (lbs)	Med (bu)	N (lbs)	High (bu)	N (lbs)
HRS Wheat	41.1	30	52.1	50	63.6	70
CPS Wheat	49.8	40	67	70	86.4	100
Feed Barley	63.3	20	80.2	40	92.7	50
Canola	27.4	25	40	60	70.8	140

The cost of buying these needed quantities of nitrogen for a 1,000 acre farm, each crop seeded on 250 acres, are summarized in Table 2.

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Table 2 – cost of N fertilizer at three soil moisture levels for 1,000 acre farm, 250 acres in each crop

Crop	**Moisture Levels** **Low**	 **Medium**	 **High**
HRS Wheat	$ 3,150	$ 5,250	$ 7,350
CPS Wheat	$ 4,200	$ 7,350	$10,500
Feed Barley	$ 2,100	$ 4,200	$ 5,250
Canola	$ 2,625	$ 6,300	$14,700
Total	$12,075	$23,100	$37,800

On many farms, the money to purchase these resources is limited. It's essential to allocate scarce fertilizer resources to get the biggest bang for the buck. Assume there is $25,000 available to spend on N fertilizer and it goes on in 10 pound increments, costing $1,050 per unit (250 acres x 10 lbs x $42). In this scenario, the fertilizer cost is for 23.8 units. AFFIRM can help producers assess how much to use depending on potential moisture regimes.

Table 3 – Crops and prices: Hard Red Spring Wheat (HRS) – $3.60/bu; Canada Prairie Spring (CPS) – $3.40/bu; Feed Barley (FB) – $2.25/bu; Canola – $6.00/bu. Price of N – $0.42/lb

Crop	**N added lbs/acre**	**MFC**	**Yield Low Moisture**	**Extra Yield**	**VMP**	**Yield Medium Moisture**	**Extra**	**VMP Yield**	**Yield High Moisture**	**Extra Yield**	**VMP**
HRS	0		32.4			36.0			39.0		
HRS	10	$4.20	35.8	3.4	$12.24	40.3	4.3	$15.48	44.0	5.0	$18.00
HRS	20	$4.20	38.7	2.9	$10.44	43.9	3.6	$12.96	48.4	4.4	$15.84
HRS	**30**	**$4.20**	**41.1**	**2.4**	**$ 8.64**	47.0	3.1	$11.16	52.2	3.8	$13.68
HRS	40	$4.20	43.1	2.0	$ 7.20	49.8	2.8	$10.08	55.6	3.4	$12.24
HRS	**50**	**$4.20**	44.9	1.8	$ 6.48	**52.1**	**2.3**	**$ 8.28**	58.5	2.9	$10.44
HRS	60	$4.20	46.4	1.5	$ 5.40	54.2	2.1	$ 7.56	61.2	2.7	$ 9.72
HRS	**70**	**$4.20**	47.8	1.4	$ 5.04	56.1	1.9	$ 6.84	**63.6**	**2.4**	**$ 8.64**
CPS	0		37.6			42.5			46.7		
CPS	10	$4.20	41.4	3.8	$12.92	47.5	5.0	$17.00	52.7	6.0	$20.40
CPS	20	$4.20	44.6	3.2	$10.88	51.8	4.3	$14.62	58.1	5.4	$18.36
CPS	30	$4.20	47.4	2.8	$ 9.52	55.6	3.8	$12.92	62.9	4.8	$16.32
CPS	**40**	**$4.20**	**49.8**	**2.4**	**$ 8.16**	58.9	3.3	$11.22	67.2	4.3	$14.62
CPS	50	$4.20	52.0	2.2	$ 7.48	61.9	3.0	$10.20	71.2	4.0	$13.60
CPS	60	$4.20	53.9	1.9	$ 6.46	64.6	2.7	$ 9.18	74.8	3.6	$12.24
CPS	**70**	**$4.20**	55.5	1.6	$ 5.44	**67.0**	**2.4**	**$ 8.16**	78.0	3.2	$10.88
CPS	80	$4.20	57.0	1.5	$ 5.10	69.2	2.2	$ 7.48	81.0	3.0	$10.20
CPS	90	$4.20	58.4	1.4	$ 4.76	71.3	2.1	$ 7.14	83.8	2.8	$ 9.52
CPS	**100**	**$4.20**	59.6	1.2	$ 4.08	73.1	1.8	$ 6.12	**86.4**	**2.6**	**$ 8.84**
FB	0		55.4			62.7			68.0		
FB	10	$4.20	59.8	4.4	$ 9.90	68.3	5.6	$12.60	74.6	6.6	$14.85
FB	**20**	**$4.20**	**63.3**	**3.5**	**$ 7.88**	72.9	4.6	$10.35	80.1	5.5	$12.38
FB	30	$4.20	66.2	2.9	$ 6.53	76.8	3.9	$ 8.78	84.9	4.8	$10.80
FB	**40**	**$4.20**	68.7	2.5	$ 5.63	**80.2**	**3.4**	**$ 7.65**	89.1	4.2	$ 9.45
FB	**50**	$4.20	70.9	2.2	$ 4.95	83.1	2.9	$ 6.53	**92.7**	**3.6**	**$ 8.10**
Canola	0		22.7			27.9			34.7		
Canola	10	$4.20	24.6	1.9	$11.40	30.7	2.8	$16.80	39.2	4.5	$27.00
Canola	20	$4.20	26.1	1.5	$ 9.00	33.1	2.4	$14.40	43.2	4.0	$24.00
Canola	**30**	**$4.20**	**27.4**	**1.3**	**$ 7.80**	35.2	2.1	$12.60	46.8	3.6	$21.60
Canola	40	$4.20	28.4	1.0	$ 6.00	37.0	1.8	$10.80	50.1	3.3	$19.80
Canola	50	$4.20				38.6	1.6	$ 9.60	53.0	2.9	$17.40
Canola	**60**	**$4.20**				**40.0**	**1.4**	**$ 8.40**	55.7	2.7	$16.20
Canola	70	$4.20				41.2	1.2	$ 7.20	58.1	2.4	$14.40
Canola	80	$4.20				42.4	1.2	$ 7.20	60.4	2.3	$13.80
Canola	90	$4.20				43.4	1.0	$ 6.00	62.5	2.1	$12.60
Canola	100	$4.20							64.4	1.9	$11.40
Canola	110	$4.20							66.2	1.8	$10.80
Canola	120	$4.20							67.8	1.6	$ 9.60
Canola	130	$4.20							69.4	1.6	$ 9.60
Canola	**140**	**$4.20**							**70.8**	**1.4**	**$ 8.40**

Note: rates of N per acre highlighted at the two to one ratio of increased yield (VMP) and fertilizer cost (MFC) for expected low, medium and high moisture regimes. Ratio $8.40 (VMP) to $4.20 (MFC)

Cont'd on page 4

"To find the solution, rank the various marginal value products (MVP) in order, highest to lowest," says Rock. "In the low moisture case, only use about 11 units of N, three for HRS wheat, (30 lbs. of N); four for CPS wheat (40 lbs. of N), two for barley (20 lbs. N) and three for canola for a total expenditure of $11,550."

In the medium moisture case, it would be necessary to use 22 units: five for HRS wheat (50 lbs. of N), seven for CPS wheat (70 lbs. of N), four for feed barley (40 lbs. of N), and six for canola (60 lbs. of N) for a total expenditure of $23,100. In the high moisture case, use the full $25,000 or 23.8 units allocated as four for HRS wheat (40 lbs. of N), almost eight for CPS wheat (70 lbs. of N), two for feed barley (20 lbs. of N), and 10 for canola (100 lbs. of N). To achieve maximum economic yield in the high moisture case, an expenditure of $37,800 would be required (Table 2). This is an individual choice for each farmer based on their tolerance for risk.

"Profits will not necessarily be maximized at the highest yield per acre," says Andreiuk. "Allocating scarce fertilizer dollars where they can give maximum returns on the money will help the bottom line next fall. Do this by ranking the MVP for each additional 10 pounds of N fertilizer and choosing only those extra revenues that exceed some pre-determined ratio, such as twice as much revenue in crops produced for each 10 pound incremental cost of N."

To download AFFIRM, visit the Alberta Agriculture website at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/sustain/soil/index.html>.

Contact:	*George Rock*	*Roger Andreiuk*
	(780) 968-8985	*(780) 968-8985*

Small problems can result in poor quality greenhouse plants

Alberta bedding plant greenhouses grow a large variety of plants. There are 5.49 million square feet of greenhouse space devoted to the production of bedding plants in the province.

"To grow quality bedding plants for satisfied customers is a challenge that involves several steps," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "It begins with choosing a good growing medium and optimizing seed germination, and continues through the growth stage where the greenhouse managers water and fertilize, control temperature and relative humidity, control disease and insect, to the finished product stage where the grower must hold the plants until they are sold."

"This year, there have been problems, such as leaf chlorosis in fuchsia, petunias and geraniums, purple spotting on nettle vine, leaf edge burning on superfinas and powdery midlew on verbenas," says Muhammad Younus, nutritonal physiologist at CDCN.

"Most of the time, the problem is related to pH and electrical conductivity (E.C.) in the root zone," adds Mirza. "When pH is measured in the growing medium, it is found to be above 6.8 in those plants that were showing chlorosis and pH was below 5.5 in plants that were showing leaf edge burning. pH is a measure of alkalinity or acidity in the growing medium. Uptake of nutrients depends on the pH of the growing medium."

pH values over 6.8 in the growing medium decreases the uptake of trace elements, such as iron and manganese, and that causes chlorosis. On the other hand, pH values below 5.5 result in an increased uptake of trace elements, such as boron and zinc. This can cause toxicity to plants.

"It is important to monitor various crops in the greenhouse, because individual plant species also contribute to the changes in the media pH," continues Mirza. "Actively growing plants, such as dhalia, zonal geraniums and verbenas, contribute towards an increase in the pH while tomato plants contribute towards the acidic side. Plants such as pansies do not significantly contribute towards the pH changes in the growing medium solution."

"If problems are not corrected immediately, plant quality may be seriously affected," says Younus. "Managing pH of the growing medium requires regular monitoring of pH and making adjustments quickly in the fertilizer program.

"pH is measured on a logarithmic scale and once pH increses or decreases, it takes a long time to bring it back to the desired levels. A pH problem can mean little time left for selling the bedding pants. By the third week of May, greenhouse doors are open for customers. Buying a good quality pH and E.C. meter is an investment that will help greenhouse growers more effectively manage bedding plants."

Contact:	*Mohyudidn Mirza*	*Muhammad Younus*
	(780) 415-2303	*(780) 415-2317*

New partnership for sustainable woodlot management

Woodlots form an important part of the agricultural landscape in Alberta. There is more than 1.5 million hectares of forested land in the province's agricultural zone.

"Alberta has significant forestry resources. Between 10 and 20 per cent of the annual allowable cut in Alberta comes off of private land. That's approximately $500 to $700 million dollars of value-added product," says Dave Burdek, conservation coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Barrhead. "To manage these resources, it is critical to develop management plans that provide sustained yields over time, and look at alternatives other than liquidation cuts."

The increased demand for fibre and trees, and the pressure for sustainable long-term supplies have helped bring together a broad-based group to form the Woodlot Pilot Extension Program.

"This three-year partnership, with contributions from industry, government and conservation groups, will address sustainable woodlot management on a landscape basis involving individual producers, municipalities and communities," explains Burdek.

The partnership was launched in November, and a new full-time staff member started in December 2000. "We're pleased to have Toso Bozic join us as Alberta Agriculture's sustainable woodlot specialist, working out of Alberta Agriculture's Barrhead office," Burdek says. Bozic, originally from Yugoslavia, most recently worked as an extension forester with the Farm Woodlot Association of Saskatchewan.

"Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) is pleased to be a partner in the program, because we see woodlots and agroforestry as an opportunity for rural diversification and as a way to improve rural economy," says Gary Bank, PFRA's district manager in Red Deer.

Woodlots and agroforestry can be a good economic diversification option, giving growers an opportunity to sell forest products when prices of more traditional agricultural commodities are down.

PFRA and many of the other partners are also interested in the environmental and social benefits of woodlots. Woodlots have a considerable effect on watersheds and are an important part of riparian habitat, the zones along the edges of streams and lakes that are home to water-loving vegetation. Other factors, such as recreation and eco-tourism are other important areas of interest.

For the Woodlot Association of Alberta (WAA), the partnership program is the culmination of almost three years of hard work to develop the concept and bring the partners on-side. "Since the four-year federal-provincial forestry agreement ended in 1996, there has not been a formal extension program offered by any government agency," explains Byron Grundberg, past president of WAA and a representative on the management committee of the new partnership. "We're excited about the new partnership and the ability to offer a dedicated staff person and a single office as the first place for landowners to start their research."

The partnership has brought additional agencies and longer-term commitments to the issue. Under the previous federal-provincial agreement, industry support tended to be on a short-term, project-by-project basis or in-kind, with no formalized commitment for long-term support. "Under this new partnership agreement, we have a three-year commitment from both the agriculture and forest industries," says Grundberg. "For the first time we also have specific commitments from conservation organizations, such as the Alberta Conservation Association and Ducks Unlimited, groups we always thought we should be aligned with, but never quite connected with."

The goals of the partnership are:

- to increase awareness of economic and environmental implications of agricultural area forest management;
- to increase landowner participation in sustainable woodlot management; and
- to encourage integrated community land use planning.

The partnership, considering sustainable forest management on a landscape level, not just an individual basis, will develop individual and integrated management plans, develop a commitment to reforestation after logging, and conduct some community planning activities.

Program partners include: Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Ainsworth Lumber Company Ltd., PFRA, Weyerhaeuser Canada Ltd., Alberta Pacific Forest Industries, Alberta Conservation Association, Vanderwell Contractors (1971) Ltd., Millar Western Forest Products Ltd., Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd., Weldwood of Canada Ltd., Ducks Unlimited Canada, and Woodlot Association of Alberta.

Contact: *David Burdek* *(780) 674-8305*
Toso Bozic *(780) 674-8213*

Water quality initiative on the Battle River

A new water quality partnership is focusing on the 30-mile stretch of the Battle River that flows through the County of Camrose from the County of Wetaskiwin boundary to Dried Meat Lake.

"Working with our key partners, the City of Camrose, the Cows and Fish Program and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, we plan to conduct riparian health assessments for any farmers or ranchers who own land along the river," explains Charlotte Mathieu, agriculture technician with the County of Camrose. "An initial meeting to bring the farmers and ranchers together will be held in the spring. Those interested will work with staff from the Cows and Fish project over the summer to complete very detailed health assessments of their riparian areas."

Riparian areas are the zones along the edges of streams and lakes where water-loving vegetation grows. These areas play a vital role in the landscape. They provide fish and wildlife habitat, flood protection and livestock shelter and forage. They also filter out some contaminants from runoff for better water quality, maintain the stream's bed and banks, stabilize stream flows and recharge groundwater.

Cows and Fish, formally called the Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Program, will provide an overall report on the health of the river's riparian areas to the partners, along with suggestions for improvements. Individual farmers and ranchers will receive confidential report cards on the health of the riparian areas on their own land.

"The report cards provide very valuable information for producers," says Dale Chrapko, conservation coordinator for Alberta Agriculture, Vermilion. "For example, the report cards tell them which areas of pasture management could be improved, not only for riparian health but also for pasture productivity."

"The County of Camrose will develop a portable solar pumping station that participating producers can trial in areas where direct access by cattle to the river needs to be removed and alternative water sources installed," says Mathieu.

This portion of the Battle River is the main water source for the City of Camrose. One of the key strategies for protecting water quality and reducing water treatment needs, is to protect the watershed. "Our upstream watershed is primarily in the counties of Camrose and Wetaskiwin," explains Ted Gillespie, city engineer. "The City of Camrose is pleased to be a partner in this project, as it fits right in with watershed protection."

In turn, Camrose wants to minimize its own impact on the river's water quality. The City spent approximately $7 million upgrading wastewater treatment a few years ago, and continues to upgrade the system as necessary.

New watershed groups are encouraged to take advantage of existing information and resources and use what they can. There are several tips and tools available.

"The reality is that watershed problems won't be solved quickly," says Karen Yakimyshyn, provincial agrologist with Alberta Agriculture, Lacombe. "Working to improve a watershed takes time. The resulting benefits for all residents in the watershed are better soil and cleaner water."

A new web site lists Alberta watershed groups, key contacts, resources and coming events. The site also offers a discussion forum. This spring, Alberta Agriculture and PFRA released a new publication on creating effective land and water stewardship groups called *Building Local Partnerships: A Guide for Creating Effective Land and Water Stewardship*.

Contact:	*Dale Chrapko*	*Karen Yakimyshyn*
	(780) 632-5466	*(403) 782-3301*

Towards a market focus: strategies during product life cycles

Products and services move through four main stages: introduction, growth, maturity and decline. How a business handles the product, advertising, promotion, investment and positioning, all vary with the life cycle stage the product is in.

"Just as there are different life cycles, there are different strategies appropriate for the stages," says Doug Walkey, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. For services and products in the introduction stage consider these four:

- **Rapid skimming** – launch the product at a high price and high advertising level. This maximizes profit but not sales volume in the initial introduction. Prices and profits are reduced as market saturation is reached at each price level. This strategy is preferred if competitors can move in quickly.
- **Slow skimming** – start new products at high prices and low promotion levels. The early adopters are offered high cost (and high profit) items. As these buyers are satisfied, the price is lowered marginally and advertising addresses a different client group. Profits are claimed at each stage with what the market will bear. This can be a very profitable strategy if there are barriers to entry by competitors.
- **Rapid penetration** – This is a low price, heavy advertising strategy. The low price helps ensure quick acceptance by clients. The goal is to establish the product as the standard, and is appropriate for "first-in-the-market" products that are easy to imitate by competitors.

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- **Slow penetration** – low price and low promotion. This is suited to products that are price sensitive, yet have little response to advertising. The ideal situation would be a large market that already knows about the product or service.

"By comparison, strategies in the growth stage are designed to fend off competitors and expand into new territory," says Walkey. Four examples of these strategies are:

- **Increase quality and features** – To remain competative you need to maintain momentum of the products. The improvements may be real (better performance) or just a change in styling.
- **Enter new markets** – expansion into new segments of existing markets or looking toward export markets are both good examples. A textbook classic example of this was McDonald's advertising directed at senior citizens through the 1980s.
- **Increase distribution coverage or channels** – For example, as service sold directly through telephone contact may contract with fertilizer agents to promote and deliver the service. This exposes a new client set within the same geography to the business.
- **Shift from product-awareness advertising to product-preference advertising** – This shifts attention from the product to the brand and helps hold competitors at bay.
- **Lower prices** – This attracts a wider segment of clients and is a solid move against competition.

"Strategies are many and varied," says Walkey. "More than that, strategies may be teamed up to have greater impact on the market and competition. Which strategies are chosen, depend on the life cycle stage of the product in its market, and the type of product/service being offered. There is no cut-and-dried solution, but advice and information is available from a variety of sources including Alberta Agriculture's business development specialists."

If you'd like more information, contact your local district office and ask for Doug Walkey, Market Specialist for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development at (403) 782-3301 or doug.walkey@gov.ab.ca.

This is article 10 of a 10-part series on *Moving Towards a Market Focus*. To read the other articles, visit Alberta Agriculture's web site, at **<www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>**.

Contact: Doug Walkey
(403) 782-3301

New reduced tillage agronomist for Peace area

Nick Underwood is the new Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL) agronomist in the Peace Area. Underwood lives in Grande Prairie and has worked in the Peace for many years. He is well known for his work with the UFA and the Canola Council.

"Underwood will work with reduced tillers to help them maintain and enhance sustainable cropping systems, increase their networks and access needed information," says Peter Gamache, RTL team leader, Edmonton. "He will also be working with RTL partners and Peace area conservation groups."

RTL is the successor program to the Alberta Reduced Tillage Initiative. It is a partnership of 10 organizations: Alberta Conservation Tillage Society, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Monsanto, Ducks Unlimited, PFRA, Olds College, Dow AgroSciences, Flexi-coil, BASF and UFA. The Agriculture & Food Council has also contributed funding to the project.

"RTL partners have pooled resources to provide an extension program to help Alberta farmers adopt sustainable cropping systems," adds Gamache. "Sustainable cropping systems improve soil quality, are economically viable, and meet society's need for safe and nutritious food. Reduced tillage and direct seeding are basic practices that conserve and enhance Alberta's natural resources and the quality of the environment for future generations."

Underwood, who can be reached at (780) 539-4498, joins three other RTL agronomists: Ron Heller, north area (780) 853-8262; Rick Taillieu, central area (403) 556-8235 and Pat Pavan, south area (403) 381-5857. Alberta producers are encouraged to contact the local RTL agrologist with reduced tillage questions.

Contact: Peter Gamache
(780) 422-7922

Agri-News Briefs

Help with habitat stewardship

Many agencies have voluntary programs to enhance habitat that fit in with the needs of agricultural operations. Many management practices offer economic or production advantages while at the same time enhance habitat conservation. There is a wealth of information about mutually beneficial agricultural practices and many agencies that offer habitat stewardship programs. For more information, contact:

- Strathcona County's Environmental Assistance Directory **<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/sustain/programs/index.heml>**
- Land Resources Stewardship Centre **<http://wwwLandStewardship.org>**

Examples of agencies include:

- Alberta Fish and Game Associations Operation Grassland Community **<http://wwwafga.org/>**
- Wildlife Habitat Canada's Stewardship Programs **<http://www.whc.org/welcome-e.htm>**
- Ducks Unlimited's Prairie CARE program **<http://www.ducks.ca/home.html>**
- Environment Canada's new Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk **<http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/sar.media/back2_e.htm>**
- Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Program (Cows and Fish) **<http://www.cowsandfish.org/>**

Cabbage seedpod weevil

A new factsheet on the cabbage seedpod weevil (Agdex # 622-21) was produced in April 2001. The publication includes information about crop damage, weevil life cycle (complete with a graphic depicting the cabbage seedpod weevil life cycle), population distribution and integrated pest management. The factsheet features 10 colour pictures of the pest at adult, larva and pupae stage; weevil distorted canola pods; and tell-tale signs of infestation. The ***Cabbage Seedpod Weevil*** factsheet is available free of charge from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Publication Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 and from all Alberta Agriculture regional advisory service offices.

Peace Regional 4-H Days

The 11th annual Peace Regional 4-H Days will be held on June 15 to 17, 2001 at the Evergreen Park, Grande Prairie. Events are planned for all members of the family. Registration forms are available from 4-H leaders or by contacting Stacy Murray and Ordella Knofp at the Fairview Regional 4-H office (780) 835-2241. For further information and a complete list of planned events, contact Murray or Knofp.

Livestock care conference

The theme of Livestock Care Conference 2001 is The *Increasing Profile of Farm Animal Welfare in North America*. The conference is scheduled for June 7, 2001 at the Libin Theatre, University of Calgary. Sponsored by Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC), Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the U of C, the conference features an international panel of speakers. Topics being discussed include: Food Industry Animal Welfare Panels and their effects on animal welfare in the U.S.; The USDA Animal Research Service; The increasing profile of farm animal welfare: How can Canada respond?; On farm quality assurance and animal welfare, an integrated working example; Alberta velvet antler removal certification program; and, The future of quality assurance, guidelines and animal welfare and the role of veterinarians. The conference is also devoting one session to bio-engineered livestock and the impact and welfare of bio-engineered animals. Registration fee for the conference is $60 (includes lunch and GST). For more information or to register, contact AFAC at (403) 932-8050 or e-mail <info@afac.ab.ca>.

Agroforestry conference

The *Seventh Biennial Conference on Agroforestry in North America and The Annual Conference of the Plains and Prairie Forestry Association* is being held at the Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre in Regina, Saskatchewan on August 13 to 15, 2001. At the conference a variety of temperate agroforestry topics will be discussed. Keynote speakers are: Andrew Gordon, University of Guelph, Ontario; Neil Sampson, president of the Sampson Group, Virginia, U.S.; Brydon Ward, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries, Alberta; and, Bruce Wight, National Agroforestry Centre, Nebraska, U.S. These specialists will address environmental mitigation, carbon and marketing carbon credits, poplar as a short rotation woody crop and shelterbelts. The conference focuses on agroforestry as it relates to changes in social and economic patterns including technology change, the agricultural economy, demand and supply of wood products. Deadline for papers or posters is June 1, 2001. Abstracts should be sent by e-mail to John Kort <kortj@em.agr.ca>. Kort can also be reached by phone at (306) 695-5111, Indian Head, Saskatchewan. For further information and a registration form, visit the conference website at <http://www.agr.ca/pfra/aftappfa.htm>. Registration information is also available by calling Edna Potter, conference registrar, at (306) 787-5949, Regina, Saskatchewan, or e-mail <epotter@agr.gov.sk.ca>.

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Agri-News

May 7, 2001

Weed survey to answer important questions

A field survey of weeds in Alberta is being undertaken this summer as part of a prairie-wide effort. Farmers may be contacted to have one or more of their fields surveyed for weeds. Approximately 4,000 randomly selected annual crop fields will be surveyed across the prairies, 1,200 fields in Alberta, 2,200 in Saskatchewan and 600 in Manitoba. The survey has three components: a walk-through weed survey, a questionnaire of management practices and a resistant weed survey of 250 fields.

"The 2001 weed survey will give the industry valuable information on what weeds are present, management factors influencing weed populations and the frequency of herbicide resistant weeds in the province," says Linda Hall, research scientist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agronomy Unit, Edmonton. "The last weed survey in Alberta was done in 1997. For this survey, researchers will assess trends and make predictions of future weed problems. Survey results will help determine the impact of herbicide tolerant canola on weed populations."

Past weed surveys have been useful to farmers, industry and government extension and research staff, by helping identify merging new weed problems. Through weed surveys, it is possible to identify weeds new to a particular area or new to a particular crop, for example, annual sow thistle in peas.

"Weed surveys give researchers the information needed to direct future research on integrated weed management," adds Hall. "The survey will also give the agriculture community future benchmarks to evaluate the impact of merging new technologies like Round-up Ready wheat."

The 2001 weed survey is receiving financial and staffing support from crop protection companies and all levels of government: local, provincial and federal. Farmers have been very supportive in previous weed surveys and will hopefully be equally supportive of this survey.

"Cooperating farmers will receive a report back of the weeds found in the surveyed field," says Hall. "Hopefully farmers on the whole will benefit by agrologists and researchers being better prepared to help with merging weed control challenges."

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Hall is the Alberta Provincial Weeds Survey Coordinator. Rob Dunn, Russel Horvey, Trevor Kloeck, Gary Berger and John Huffman, cereal and oilseeds specialists with Alberta Agriculture will assist at the regional level. Client Service Representatives with Alberta Agriculture will be contacting farmers before spraying is complete to get permission to do the weed survey. County Agricultural Service Board staff will help do the weed counts in the field after spraying and before harvest. Gordon Thomas, Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, will coordinate the weed survey across the three prairie provinces, while Hugh Beckie, also with AAFC, will coordinate the weed resistance.

For more information please contact Hall at (780) 422-1071.

Contact: *Linda Hall*
(780) 422-1071

Tips on completing the Census of Agriculture Questionnaire

Who should fill in the Census of Agriculture questionnaire? The person(s) responsible for, or who has knowledgeable about, the day-to-day management decisions of an agricultural operation.

What is an agricultural operation? An agricultural operation produces at least one of the following products intended for sale. It is not necessary to have actually had sales in the past 12 months.

- Crops – hay, field crops, tree fruits or nuts, berries or grapes, vegetables, seed
- Livestock – cattle, pigs, sheep, horses, game animals, other livestock
- Poultry – hens, chickens, turkeys, chicks, game birds, exotic birds, other poultry
- Animal products – milk or cream, eggs, wool, furs, meat
- Other agricultural products – greenhouse or nursery products, Christmas trees, mushrooms, sod, honey, maple syrup products

How long will it take to fill out the Census? It may take about 40 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The time it takes will depend on the size and type of your operation. The questionnaire contains 27 steps, but you complete only those steps that apply to your operation.

What records will be useful in filling out your Census of Agriculture questionnaire? The following records may help save you time:

- property tax statements
- 2000 income tax forms
- crop management and herd management records
- account books or computerized farm accounts
- financial statements prepared for lending institutions

"It is known from past censuses that a growing number of farmers use computers, and for 2001 the section on computer use has been expanded to ask how computers are used," says Kendall Olson, communications officer, 2001 Census of Agriculture, Statistics Canada. "Two questions on organic farming are brand new for 2001. More detail has also been added to several existing sections to respond to requests for more information on subjects such as livestock types and land management."

The law protects the Census information provided by Canadians. The confidentiality of the Census of Agriculture form is protected by law. Only Statistics Canada employees who work with census data and have taken an oath of secrecy, see the forms.

Canadians can ask to see the information they gave on their 2001 Census of Agriculture after November 2001. To do this, write to the Privacy Coordinator, Statistics Canada, 25th Floor, R.H. Coats Building, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0T6.

Do I have to fill in the Census of Agriculture questionnaire? Yes. Completion of the questionnaire is mandatory under the ***Statistics Act***. A person may be liable to a fine of $500 or imprisonment for three months, or both, for refusing to answer the questions.

What if I need help? The Census of Agriculture Help Line operates between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. from May 1 to Thursday, May 31. If you have any questions, need assistance in completing the questionnaire, or require extra forms, call 1-800-216-2299.

Your help in making the 2001 Census of Agriculture a success is appreciated.

Contact: *Kendall Olson*
(780) 495-4655

22 deaths on Alberta farms in 2000

Tractor roll-over, auger entanglement and asphyxiation are just a few of the causes of 22 farm incident-related deaths in Alberta last year.

"Twenty-two people lost their lives while working on Alberta farms in 2000," says Solomon Kyeremanteng, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's farm safety program, Edmonton. "All 22 fatalities were male, 11 were farmers in the over-65 age group; three were children."

While it may be said that a disproportionate number of people over 65 still work on farms, it is alarming to see statistics showing how many of these older Albertans are being injured

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or killed while they are working on the farm. A study is currently underway, trying to identify any possible link between commonly used medications and accident rates in this age group.

Of the 22 reported farm-related fatalities, most involved farm vehicles or machinery, such as tractors, trucks, all terrain vehicles, augers and power take-offs. It is imperative that farmers and farm workers exercise caution when working with equipment and vehicles.

"The final Canadian statistics for 2000 are still being compiled, however, preliminary reports show that Alberta has the lowest incident rate of farm injury and farm related fatalities," adds Kyeremanteng. "This can be attributed in part to the emphasis that is put on farm safety. For many years Alberta Agriculture has supported programs and campaigns that bring awareness of farm safety for all age groups to the forefront."

"As Albertans head into another growing season, it is hoped that safety will be upper most in the minds of those working on farms and with farm machinery," says Kyeremanteng. "A few extra minutes to ensure safe operation of machinery is sometimes all it takes to avoid an injury or a fatality. As the theme of Alberta's farm safety program says, ***A Safe Farm is a Great Place to Grow!"***

Contact: *Solomon Kyeremanteng*
(780) 427-4227

Farm fatalities 2000

Date	Sex	Age	Agent/Activity	Cause
01-26	M	39	silo auger entanglement	multiple injuries
10-30	M	4 ½	fell from tractor	multiple injuries
05-05	M	76	struck by boom arm	head trauma
05-29	M	50	struck by truck box	crushed
06-01	M	85	burned in welding fire	burns to body
06-18	M	71	struck by cattle gate	massive head trauma
06-27	M	10	ATV rollover	crushed
06-28	M	70	horse fell on victim	multiple injuries
07-04	M	82	tractor roll over	multiple injuries
07-19	M	14	struck by gate	crushed
07-31	M	68	run over by tractor	multiple injuries
08-11	M	47	H2S poisoning	suffocation
08-11	M	29	H2S poisoning	suffocation
08-17	M	75	fell off tractor	crushed
09-08	M	71	tree fell on victim	massive head injuries
09-18	M	78	combine highway accident	massive internal injuries
09-21	M	80	ATV roll over	multiple injuries
10-10	M	20	caught in conveyor	massive trauma
10-15	M	32	struck by truck box	crushed
10-24	M	71	fell into well	head & neck trauma
12-12	M	35	fell from ladder	head & neck trauma
12-17	M	22	caught in power take-off	multiple injuries

Green potatoes

Many people were brought up being told not to eat green potatoes. At the very least, it was always advised to cut off the offending green portion before throwing the rest of the tuber in the pot. The advice was actually very good. Green potatoes often contain high levels of toxic glycoalkaloids. Glycoalkaloids themselves are not green, but the conditions that promote the accumulation of green chlorophyll can also promote the formation glycoalkaloids. However, high levels of glycoalkaloids might also be present in potatoes that are perfectly white.

"Glycoalkaloids occur naturally in potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, and other members of the Solanaceae family," says Darcy Driedger, food scientist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Research has shown that high levels might make the potato plant more resistant to Colorado potato beetles and potato leafhoppers, leading scientists to speculate that glycoalkaloids help protect the plant from predators. Concentrations tend to be much lower in the tubers than in the leaves and vines where insects would most likely attack the plant."

Most people can perceive a bitter burning sensation in their throat when they eat unflavored potatoes containing unusually high concentrations of glycoalkaloids. One of the effects that glycoalkaloids have on the body is to disrupt cell membranes, leading to the burning sensation that people experience. At higher levels, cell membrane destruction can result in abdominal pain and bleeding. Once glycoalkaloids enter the bloodstream, they can also inhibit a group of enzymes called cholinesterases that are critical to the function of the nervous system. Glycoalkaloids have the same effect on the nervous system as organophosphate chemicals such as sarin (nerve gas used in chemical warfare).

"Given the widespread consumption of potatoes, documented cases of glycoalkaloid poisoning are fortunately very rare," adds Driedger. "The last reported case of significant human illness from eating potatoes occurred in 1979 in England. It was reported that 78 children at a school in southeast London began complaining of diarrhea, vomiting and malaise. Eventually, 17 of the children were hospitalized with several becoming comatose.

All the students who became ill had been part of the first sitting of the midday meal at the school. Potatoes were the only item of food eaten in common by all the ill children. Subsequent analysis of the potatoes remaining in the school kitchen showed they contained about 330 mg/kg glycoalkaloid, a level approximately five-times higher than typically seen in table potatoes."

There has been some speculation that glycoalkaloids may have caused the death of several head of cattle that were grazing in unharvested potato fields in southern Alberta in March, 2001. The actual cause of death has not yet been confirmed. Given that livestock are considered much more resistant to glycoalkaloid poisoning than humans, it would be premature to conclude that the cattle died of glycoalkaloid poisoning.

"Several factors can cause glycoalkaloid levels to increase in potatoes after they are harvested, including exposure to light for several days, temperature extremes, and physical injury to the tuber," says Driedger. "Sprouting usually has little effect on the tubers, although the sprouts themselves contain very high levels and should not be eaten. Glycoalkaloid levels are largely unaffected by cooking and frying. Genetics also play an important role and plant breeders have rejected several promising lines because of glycoalkaloid concerns."

Alberta potato researchers are working to ensure that glycoalkaloid poisoning remains an extremely rare occurrence. New potato cultivars developed in western Canada are systematically screened for glycoalkaloids at the CDCS. Researchers at the University of Alberta have developed several testing methods for potato glycoalkaloids and are recognized internationally as leaders in this field. No new potato varieties are registered in Canada unless glycoalkaloid levels are less than 200 mg/kg. Good science and common sense will ensure that potatoes remain an important part of a healthy diet.

Contact: Darcy Driedger
(403) 362-1339

Do you have what it takes to market direct?

Farm direct marketing encompasses everything from offering "agri-education" through school tours to setting up a farm store or u-pick berry farm.

"There is more to developing these types of businesses than putting out a sign and opening the gates," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "An understanding of the trends shaping consumer buying habits is needed. It's important to determine the wants and needs of potential clients. For example, people want a connection with the farmers that are growing their food and there is an increase in the number of day trips taken by the urban population. Finding out what teachers and students want in agri-education; or what mothers want out of a day-trip to the country; or what events kids enjoy at a festival is a good place to start when considering farm direct marketing."

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Once some market research is completed, the infrastructure needs to be assessed. Signs, parking, layout, traffic flow, displays, buildings, facilities, grounds and equipment are a few of the basic requirements needed to help create a more effective farm direct marketing venture on your farm.

"Customer parking is crucial," adds Engel. "Having sufficient parking for peak sales periods is a must. Entrances and exists need to be visible, well marked with signs and safe."

Consider whether a sales structure and rest areas are needed. Traffic movement (flow) around the grounds should be well planned. If needed, develop a landscape maintenance plan to ensure the market area is looking its best.

"Road sings and directional signs are a must," says Engel. "Don't forget price signs and informational or educational signage."

There is a lot to think about when considering this type of endeavour. If you are thinking about diversifying into farm direct marketing contact Engel at (780)349-4465 for more information.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development recently released three new factsheets focusing on the agri-tourism industry: ***Country Vacation Enterprise, Rural Festivals and Special Events***, and ***Providing Farm Tours***. Along with the publication ***Direct Marketing for Rural Producers*** and ***Farm Direct Marketing – Know your Regulations***, these factsheets provide information on farm direct marketing and agri-tourism industries, regulatory consideration, operations, marketing and market focus, and financial and economic issues. They also provide a list of other references along with contact people in the industry.

These factsheets are available from Alberta Agriculture's publications office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, and at Alberta Agriculture regional advisory services offices.

Information is also available through the Alberta Agriculture web site: <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4465

AAEA conference

The theme for this year's annual Alberta Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) conference is ***Visions 2001 – Looking Forward: The New Agricultural Economy***. The conference is being held at the Black Knight Inn, Red Deer on May 10 and 11, 2001.

"This year, the conference will focus on structural change in agriculture, new linkages, and new business structures and issues in the new millennium," says Paul Gervais, management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "The keynote speaker is Richard Egelton, senior vice president and deputy chief economist with the Bank of Montreal. Other highlights of the conference include Dr. Ted Chambers of the Western Center for Economic Research discussing Canada's place in light of changing and evolving markets, and by Louise Neveu, CEO, Farm Credit Corporation, speaking on the subject Financing Environmental Stewardship."

The AAEA brings together Alberta's agri-industry professionals and the sector's leaders from across the industry. The annual conference provides a forum to exchange ideas on economic, social, and environmental issues that are at the forefront of the agricultural industry and Alberta's economic future.

Further information about the conference is available on-line at: <www.aaea.ab.ca>.

Contact: Paul Gervais
(403) 556-4250

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Agri-News Briefs

Cattle identification a must

Canadian packing plants are expected to begin reading the Canadian Cattle Identification Program (CCIP) individual identification numbers on cattle beginning July 1, 2001. Feedlots and others who direct-ship cattle should be aware that packing plants expect cattle to arrive tagged as of that date. Packers take health and safety issues seriously. It is often at carcass inspection within the packing plant that health issues are recognized. Packing plants play an important role in protecting the health of the Canadian herd. As of July 1, packing plants are required to read the tag numbers and maintain the identification to the point of carcass inspection. All cattle currently in the system that are moving from their present location are required to be tagged with a Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) approved ear tag. Monetary penalties for non-compliance begin July 1, 2002. Once the CCIP is fully operational, the ID number will be used to help the Canadian Food Inspection Agency trace, contain and eliminate serious animal health and food safety problems faster than is possible without individual identification. For further information contact the CCIA toll free at 1-877-909-2333.

Crop protection conference

The Crop Protection Institute's 49th annual conference and general meeting are being held on September 16 to 19, 2001 at the Sheraton Fallsview, Niagara Falls, ON. The theme of this year's conference is ***Beyond Science: Society at Risk?*** The conference is intended to zero in on the potential risks of disregarding solid scientific evidence. During the conference, speakers and presentations will demonstrate how misinformation can create fear, stir up dissension and shake public faith. Science-based industries are working together to educate consumers, allay fears, correct misinformation and respond to media reports. One of the keynote speakers at the conference is Rex Murphy, award-winning reporter for ***The National*** and host of CBC Radio's ***Cross Country Checkup***. For further information, contact the Crop Protection Institute toll free at 1-800-850-6559.

Show me the money – and how to get it

An agri-value and agri-business ***Access to Capital*** symposium is being held on June 13, 2001 at the Sheraton Cavalier Hotel, Calgary. This is an exciting opportunity for new venture developers, entrepreneurs and those who work with them, to learn about alternative sources of capital and, most importantly, how to gain access to it. Symposium participants will hear remarks from capital investors, business development officers, and other associated professionals on how to acquire capital to get a business off the ground. Many topics will be covered, including what types of capital is available, how to acquire capital from non-traditional sources, ways to attract capital to agribusiness, and how to source equity partners. All participants will receive a copy of the presentations for future reference. Participants are also invited to an evening reception and networking event. Registration fee is $100 and includes all symposium sessions and related documents, lunch, refreshments, and evening reception/ networking event. For further information, contact Gerry Steinley, senior development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton, (780) 422-2622 or contact Kim McLelland, member of the organizing committee, Calgary, (403) 274-2774 for details and registration forms. Early registration is recommended.

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Agri-News

May 14, 2001

Foot and Mouth Disease information for travelers and biosecurity on the farm

Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is an extremely contagious disease affecting cloven-hoofed animals, including cattle, pigs, sheep, bison, deer, elk, llamas and even elephants. Although adult animals rarely die, the disease renders them very ill, as they become lame, stop eating and develop painful vesicles in their mouths and on their feet, teats and udders.

The United Kingdom has reported over 1400 cases of FMD since the epidemic began on February 19, 2001. Ireland, France, the Netherlands, Argentina and Uruguay have also been affected by this disease. The current method of control in the United Kingdom is to stamp the disease out, requiring mass slaughter of infected animals and those in the vicinity of a confirmed case.

"Although FMD has an obvious impact on livestock production, it is more importantly a trade issue, as its occurrence immediately shuts down access to a country's export markets for livestock and livestock products," says Dr. Gerald Ollis, chief provincial veterinarian, food safety division, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Trade may be stopped for a minimum of 18 months, which would have a devastating impact on Alberta's economy, if FMD were to occur here."

Many people to do not realize that FMD is not a new disease. Although there has been a recent outbreak in the United Kingdom and Europe, the disease is endemic in many countries in Asia, Africa and South America. Some countries struggle with FMD on a continual basis. The Office International des Epizooties (OIE) lists only 45 countries as being FMD free as of March 2001.

"To keep FMD and other foreign animal diseases out of Canada, it is important for international travelers to remain informed and to actively take responsibility for preventing entry of disease to our agriculture industry," adds Ollis. "The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), in cooperation with

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Canada Customs, has recently strengthened their surveillance of international travelers coming into Canada."

On April 3, 2001, the CFIA issued an advisory outlining precautionary measures that Canadians traveling abroad and international visitors to our country should be taking. Recommendations when visiting or coming from an infected country include:

- avoid contact with susceptible animals in the wilderness, zoos and on farms
- remain in urban surroundings, if possible
- use a disposable camera for photographs and have the film developed before you return to Canada
- before you come to Canada, be sure to disinfect all footwear, baggage and personal effects using a 50% vinegar solution
- never bring any meat, dairy or other animal products into Canada
- answer all questions in the Canada Customs declaration honestly and accurately
- **if you live on a livestock farm**, book yourself into a hotel in the city for at least 36 hours after arrival into Canada. Have someone bring you a complete set of clothing and footwear to wear home, dry clean your clothes and have a thorough shower with a vinegar rinse at your first opportunity.

The CFIA has also outlined specific biosecurity measures that should be practiced if you live on a farm and/or own livestock. These include:

- do not allow imported meat, dairy or other animal products onto your farm
- keep a visitor log of who has been on your farm, where they have come from and what livestock they have been in contact with for the last 14 days.
- if you suspect someone has arrived from an infected country less than 14 days ago, **do not let them onto your farm**
- provide visitors with boots and coveralls to be worn during their visit. Be sure to clean and disinfect the garments before they are supplied to another visitor.
- do not allow visitors to contact susceptible animals
- workers who move from one farm/ranch to another should be disinfecting their boots with a 50% vinegar solution or Virkon.
- if you have many visitors, make them walk over a piece of carpet soaked with 50% vinegar or Virkon and recharge the disinfectant frequently, as Virkon contaminated with soil is not as effective.

Further information regarding FMD is available on the CFIA website, at <www.cfia-acia.agr.ca>, or the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD) website, at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: Dr. Gerald Ollis (780) 427-6535

Farmers to receive $10.29 per acre

Provincial producers dealing with economic difficulties will be eligible for an assistance package worth $10.29 per acre on all cultivated land this spring through the Canada – Alberta Farm Income Assistance Program.

Following up on the announcement in Budget 2001, Deputy Premier and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Minister Shirley McClellan, said the acreage payment will be based on land farmed in 2000 and will be paid to farmers who actively farmed the land during this period.

Funding for the Canada – Alberta Farm Income Assistance program was made available through Budget 2001. The provincial cost is partially offset by the $126.8 million that is Alberta's portion of the federal agriculture assistance package announced in March 2001.

"We have made the commitment to assist our farmers struggling with some difficult times through no fault of their own," said McClellan. "We also recognize that this is a transition period for agriculture and we need to find long-term solutions to the issues that are facing farmers. We began the process to find those solutions with Ag Summit 2000 last year and through other initiatives within the Ministry. This new assistance program will help us bridge the gap between now and when those solutions can be implemented."

Copies of the application form are available on the Internet at www.agric.gov.ab.ca and will be available at any Agriculture, Food and Rural Development office in the province and all MLA offices by the end of next week. For more information, producers can call Alberta Connects toll-free at 310-4455.

Mailing of cheques will begin at the end of May.

Contact: John Knapp
Program Services
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-9167

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

Sharing water

Despite the odd patch of green left by an April snowstorm on the southern Alberta landscape, the Willow Creek Irrigators Association knows precipitation is needed perhaps more than any other time in the past several years.

"This community-driven Association of about 50 farmers west of Claresholm knows that the spirit of togetherness will be tested this year as water supply conditions are at, or near, historical lows and water sharing will once again be a reality," says Ernie Hui, head of licensing and permitting, water management division, Alberta Environment, Edmonton. "It is not a reality that is forced on them. In fact, anybody who doesn't want to share, doesn't have to. But if they don't, these people know that somebody, quite possibly their neighbour, could very well go without, not only ruining a crop but also a livelihood."

Farmer Orrin Hart knows water sharing will allow the community to get through these difficult times brought on by a drier than average fall and a serious shortage of winter precipitation. He also realizes it is the only way for others to legally get around the licence priorities set up, ironically, to protect his right to water as the owner of one of the most senior licences in the area.

Since 1894, during times of water shortages, government has used a *first-in-time, first-in-right* method of determining who will get their allocations and who will not. What this means is that priority must be given to those with the oldest water licences, regardless of the type of use.

"This system was legislated 108 years ago and it continues to be the best system to allow for orderly development," adds Hui. "It ensures that people are protected from demands by those who develop after them, and protects the instream uses of water."

While first-in-time, first-in-right still forms the legal guidelines surrounding water allocation, times such as these require some innovative solutions so that at least some water can flow to those who need it. But, government also recognizes that unless the situation is extreme and a special legislative order is given, it can't force people to share.

Hart says it is in nobody's interest to hog water at the peril of others. That's why in 1984 the Willow Creek Irrigators Association took things into its own hands to start what is now known as the birth of water sharing. "Anybody who needs it should be getting it," says Hart. "It's only fair that we shut down and let somebody else have some instead of hogging water all summer."

Last year and in several years in the late 80s, members of the Association agreed to waive their licensed water rights so that all could get an equal amount of water that was released from government operated water storage. For many, that meant at least getting some. For others it meant getting a lot less than they may have been entitled to.

"It is a means to an end. It means that the water flowing by here is at least being used to the fullest," said Don Chatterton, a member of the Association. "The majority of people in the group do it for their concern for their fellow man."

Hui says Willow Creek is a good example of Albertans understanding that the best way to get through tough periods is to work together. "These people have demonstrated time and again that they're willing to sacrifice some for the good of the whole," says Hui. "Solutions made by Albertans are always preferable to those that are government imposed."

The first-in-time, first-in-right system was put in place in 1894 by the federal government's Northwest Irrigation Act. Since that time, ownership of water is vested in the Crown and anyone who wants to use it may receive that right through a licence. Water ownership came under provincial jurisdiction in 1931.

Regional water managers will continue to encourage users to work together on a sharing plan. Many are in the process of working with Alberta Environment to determine how sharing would work.

"In times of a shortage, Alberta Environment is committed to managing water according to the licensing system, and that includes working with groups of licensees that are interested in sharing their license, while respecting the right of household water users and the instream environment." says Hui.

Contact: *Ernie Hui*
(780) 427-9496

Protect yourself from hamburger disease

Alberta Health and Wellness cautions consumers to take precautions against E. coli 0157 or "hamburger disease."

"Despite sophisticated food safety practices by farmers and within the meat industry, there are no guarantees that ground meat on store shelves is 100 per cent free from contamination of bacteria, including E.coli 0157 and salmonella," says Dr. Karen Grimsrud, deputy provincial health officer with Alberta Health and Wellness, Edmonton.

To prevent illness, consumers are encouraged to take simple food-handling precautions when cooking meat, such as:

- Thaw meat in the refrigerator.
- Cook meat thoroughly.
- Wash your hands before and after handling food and raw meats.
- Keep meat separate from other foods to avoid cross contamination.

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Also known as Haemorrhagic Colitis, E. coli 0157 is nicknamed "hamburger disease" because it is often associated with ground beef; however, it is also linked with undercooked beef, pork, poultry products, as well as yoghurt, cheese, sprouts, lettuce and unpasteurized milk and apple juice.

Common symptoms of the disease are mild dehydration and diarrhea. In more severe cases, individuals experience painful stomach cramps and bloody diarrhea.

So far this year, Alberta has recorded 44 cases of E. coli 0157. A single source of the bacteria in Alberta has not been identified.

The Canada Alberta Partners in Food Safety (CAPiFS) ensures a complementary delivery of federal/provincial food safety systems in Alberta. CAPiFS is a partnership of Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Contact: Dr. Karen Grimsrud
(780) 427-5263

What is hamburger disease?

Hamburger disease is a type of food-borne illness caused by the bacteria E. coli 0157. Certain strains of the bacteria, primarily E. coli 0157, produce a poison or toxin that damages the lining of the intestine producing diarrhea and pain.

"This illness has been nicknamed *hamburger disease* because the bacteria that causes these symptoms to occur has been found in raw and undercooked meat such as beef, pork or poultry," says Dr. Karen Grimsrud, deputy provincial health officer with Alberta Health and Wellness, Edmonton. "Ground beef, which can act as an ideal medium for growing E. coli, is the food most often associated with infection."

How serious is hamburger disease?

While most people recover from this disease within two weeks, in a small number of cases, mostly children and the elderly, complications occur. The poison can reach the kidneys, causing serious damage. As a result, patients can require dialysis and, eventually, a kidney transplant. In rare cases, death can result.

How do you avoid getting the disease?

To avoid getting hamburger disease:

- Take extra precautions when cooking, storing, and handling food.
- Wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling food and raw meats.
- Refrigerate or freeze meats as soon as possible after buying.
- Thaw frozen meats in the refrigerator and not at room temperature. Thawing in a microwave is an acceptable alternative, however, once meat is thawed cook immediately or put back into the refrigerator.
- Do not let raw or cooked meat sit at room temperature. Serve cooked meats immediately or keep them hot (above 60 degrees C or 140 degrees F). Prepare raw hamburger patties or other meats quickly, and either cook them immediately or put them in the refrigerator.
- Cook all ground meats thoroughly so that the centre is brown and juices are clear. Double-check to see if larger cuts of meat are thoroughly cooked by using a meat thermometer to check the internal temperature.
- Wash all utensils, cutting boards and counters with hot soapy water to prevent bacteria found in raw meats from contaminating other foods.
- Do not reuse utensils or plates that have been in contact with raw meats, until after they have been washed.
- When in doubt, throw it out!

What are the symptoms of hamburger disease?

Common symptoms are diarrhea, dehydration and fever. In more severe cases, individuals have painful stomach cramps and bloody diarrhea. Symptoms can appear usually from three to four days but could be up to eight days after ingesting the bacteria. Most often, illness appears three to four days after eating contaminated food.

How do you treat hamburger disease?

- See your doctor if you experience bloody diarrhea.
- Drink lots of clear fluids.
- In most cases, antibiotics are not useful.

What's being done about hamburger disease?

"The *Alberta Public Health Act* requires physicians and laboratories to notify the local Regional Health Authority of cases of hamburger disease so that they can be investigated by public health officials.

"Provincial and federal government inspectors monitor food processing in federally and provincially regulated slaughter and process establishments," says Grimsrud. "All food establishments, including restaurants, retail or wholesale outlets, and other premises where food is prepared or manufactured, are subject to routine inspections by public health inspectors. Also, food sanitation courses are presented by public health inspectors to food handlers and to the public to improve food hygiene techniques."

Contact: Dr. Karen Grimsrud
(780) 427-5263

Conferences in Alberta

Every year hundreds of provincial/national agriculture and food conferences are held across North America. For many producers and processors it is impossible to attend more than one local conference let alone a national one. That is why the latest issue of the ***Northwest Processor*** newsletter is highlighting conferences on three agri-preneural areas: specialty food processing, farm direct marketing and agri-tourism.

"The specialty food market looks to the ***Fancy Food Show*** for industry trends," says Karen Goad, agri-food development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie. "Walking through the door of the Winter 2001 Fancy Food Show was like stepping into another world. The colors, elegant booth designs, variety of products and packaging, and sheer numbers of people were almost overwhelming."

"Highlights of the Fancy Food Show were educational programs and tours," adds Janice McGregor, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Morinville. "Organized by Epicurean Excursions, a San Francisco based culinary tour and event company, the two-day tour of high volume specialty retailers and smaller specialty shops provided a unique look at the San Francisco food scene. For more trend information on the specialty food market check out pages 1 and 2 of the April issue of the *Northwest Processor*."

Rural Canada is shaping up to be the next hottest tourism destination. The concept of rural tourism is driven by consumer need. Travelers are looking for unique experiences that highlight the nature, heritage, culture and cuisine of an area. They want a chance to participate in their traveling experience, not just sit back and watch. Alberta and Ontario's spring 2001 rural tourism conferences are highlighted in the April *Northwest Processor*.

Farm direct marketing is the most exciting and progressive sector in agriculture," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "The North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) hosted 800 participants from across the USA, Canada and the UK January 14-21, 2001 in Mesa, Arizona at their ***Diversity in the Desert*** conference. Participants included farm direct marketers, farmers' market managers and extension staff. They met to improve their networks and to beg, borrow and steal ideas to help their growing farm direct industries back home."

More than 200 people gathered to explore the world of farm direct marketing in Nisku, Alberta on February 26 and 27, 2001. To find out what participants at both to these farm direct marketing conferences learned as they investigated this rapidly growing market option, look in the latest ***Northwest Processor*** newsletter.

If you've attended a conference recently and would like to share the top 10 ideas you learned with other agri-preneurs, send an email to Engel at <kerry.engel@gov.ab.ca>.

To receive a free subscription or copy of the ***Northwest Processor***, call 780-349-4465. Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialling 310-0000 and then the number.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

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Agri-News Briefs

Alpaca ranch open house

The Saumer-Time Alpaca Ranch is holding its second annual Open House on May 26, 2001. Anyone interested in Alpacas is welcome to visit the farm during the open house. The event is intended to increase public awareness and provide education on Alpacas and fleece use. Information sessions, spinning, weaving and shearing demonstrations will be featured. Some hands-on discoveries will occur, too. It is an event the whole family can enjoy. Refreshments will be available. Saumer-Time Alpaca Ranch is located west of Stony Plain. For further information and directional instructions, contact Tom and Carolyne Saumer, Doug Sadler, Wendy Loar or Heather Strachan at (780) 967-2689.

Tractor tire tips

- A properly inflated radial is six to eight per cent more efficient than a bias-ply tire. Radial tires need more management than bias-ply tires. Matching inflation pressures to loads is critical to optimizing the performance of radial tires.
- Don't exceed the maximum permissible operating weight/ load for the tractor tires. Consult the owner's manual or tire manufacturer's guidebook for recommended pressures for given loads.
- Check tire pressures regularly.
- Use an accurate pressure gauge for measuring low pressures. An error of two pounds per square inch (psi) won't have a big effect on performance with 30 psi tire pressure, but with pressures of 12 psi or less, two psi is a 20 per cent error.
- Never exceed 35 psi inflation pressure, as severe damage or personal injury can occur should the tire separate from the rim.
- The pressure recommendations molded into the side of tires are maximum pressures for maximum loads. Using these pressures at less than maximum load can adversely affect tire and tractor performance
- Always inflate and ballast all tires on the same axle to the same level.
- Remember that changing tire size will change travel speed – a factor to consider when adjusting ballast to match travel speed. For further information, contact the Agtech Centre (403) 329-1212, Lethbridge.

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May 28 to June 1 is Dutch Elm Disease Awareness Week

Alberta has the largest DED-free stands of American elms in the world, but Dutch Elm Disease (DED) remains a very real threat to Alberta elms. Alberta and B.C. are considered together as one of the last two locations in North America free of this destructive disease of elm trees. The other DED-free location is Newfoundland. The non-profit organization, Society to Prevent Dutch Elm Disease (STOPDED) and Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development have been promoting prevention programs throughout the province to save Alberta elms. Public awareness is a key component to the success of the program.

"The week of May 28 to June 1, 2001 has been proclaimed ***Dutch Elm Disease Awareness Week*** in Alberta," says Janet Feddes-Calpas, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Dutch Elm Disease program coordinator, Edmonton. "Until there is a cure for DED, prevention remains our most effective form of control. DED can be prevented."

Albertans are asked to help save the province's beautiful American elm trees by taking the following preventive measures:

- Keep elm trees healthy and vigorous.
- Elm wood provides ideal breeding sites for the tiny elm bark beetle that spreads DED. Dispose of all elm wood by burning, burying or chipping it.
- Learn how to identify the signs of DED and beetle activity so that you can report them to the nearest DED Hotline to your community. Symptoms usually appear in mid June to mid-July when the leaves wilt or droop, curl up and become brown. Leaves on trees infected later in the season usually turn yellow and drop prematurely. Leaf symptoms are accompanied by brown staining under the bark. All suspicious elms must be tested in a lab for the presence of the fungus. A confirmed DED tree must be carefully removed and properly disposed of immediately to prevent further spread.
- Water elms well from April to mid-August. To allow the tree to harden off for the winter, watering should be stopped mid-August, followed by a good soaking or two before freeze-up.

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- Dead branches and trees, which provide beetle habitat, should be removed. Since elm bark beetles are attracted to fresh tree wounds, pruning can only be done between October 1 to March 31 when the beetles are not in their active stage.
- Become more involved in the preservation of Alberta's elm trees and become a STOPDED member.

DO NOT!

- Store elm firewood at any time!
- Transport elm firewood!
- Prune elms between April 1st to September 30th!
- Top your tree, removing upper portion severely weakens the tree and shortens its life span.

"DED has killed millions of elms throughout North America since 1930 when the disease was first introduced by infected wood from Europe," adds Feddes-Calpas. "According to the 2000 surveys, the incidents of DED continues to spread in the south eastern corner of Saskatchewan and south portion of Manitoba. Through aggressive provincial prevention programs, the numbers have been kept down in both provinces. Great Falls, Montana, also continues to fight the disease and has managed to keep losses down to two to three per cent a year."

An Alberta province-wide elm inventory was completed by STOPDED in cooperation with Alberta Agriculture. There are a total of 219,334 elms, valued at $634 million, growing in Alberta urban areas. The condition and size of each elm tree was recorded. A complete elm inventory supplies the basic information necessary for an effective management program should DED appear in Alberta. The information identifies areas where more intensive surveillance is necessary due to the number and condition of the elm trees.

Municipal plantings of elms, range from 10 to 50 per cent of the overall tree plantings. Alberta cannot afford to lose a resource that provides so many environmental benefits. In Alberta landscaping, there is a very limited choice of trees, none of which approach the aesthetic beauty or suitability elms. Without an on going continuous prevention program, the entire population of elms in a community can easily be lost within a few short years.

"DED is a disease caused by a fatal fungus that clogs the elm tree's water conducting system, causing its leaves to wilt and the tree to die, usually within one or two seasons," explains Feddes-Calpas. "The fungus, that affects all species of elm, is primarily spread from one tree to another by two species of insect vectors, the smaller European elm bark beetle (SEEBB), and the native elm bark beetle (NEBB). The beetles are attracted to weak and dying trees that serve as breeding sites for the beetles. Once the beetles have pupated and turned into adults they leave the brood gallery and fly to healthy elms to feed, transporting the fungus on their bodies from one tree to the next.

"For this reason, it is important that elm firewood not be transported into or within Alberta as the wood may be harboring the bark beetles that carry the deadly DED fungus. Firewood is confiscated at all the Alberta-Montana border crossings. Monitoring for the beetle is done every year throughout the province."

Alberta has been fortunate to remain DED free for many years, however, in 1998 an isolated case of the disease was confirmed in Wainwright. The tree was immediately removed and burned. It is believed that firewood brought into the province was the source of infection. In previous years SEEBB have been found in Calgary, Edmonton, St. Albert, Red Deer, Strathcona County, Vauxhall, High River, Coutts and Medicine Hat. In 2000, new municipalities to capture SEEBB were Killam and Lloydminster

"All the municipalities in the province are encouraged to develop a DED prevention program that involves monitoring for the vectors, DED surveillance, public awareness, firewood control, and pruning of dead wood out of the elms between the dates of October 1 to March 31," says Feddes-Calpas. "A ***DED Response Plan*** has been completed for the province of Alberta outlining the responsibilities of organizations in the management of DED."

For more information on Dutch elm disease or the DED prevention program, call the provincial hotline. The number is toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 and asking for 362-1300. Information is also available on the Alberta Agriculture web site's DED page, <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/pests/diseases/ded/index.html>.

Contact: Janet Feddes-Calpas
(403) 362-1337

Details of carry-over rebate program for agricultural users

Details of a summer natural gas rebate program for greenhouses, irrigators and alfalfa dehydrating plants that use natural gas, propane or diesel fuel for pumping, dehydrating or dehumidifying are available. These users are eligible for a summer rebate similar to what was offered during the winter rebate program that expired on April 30, 2001.

"The summer months are a very high consumption period for these particular users," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "The Government of Alberta made a commitment that we would ensure they were protected from high natural gas prices, just as we have done for the province's other agricultural users this winter."

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The irrigation rebates will cover the mid-May to mid-September period, the time when the majority of irrigation takes place. Alfalfa dehydrators will receive their rebate during the June to September period, when the majority of their activity occurs.

All commercial greenhouses that delayed start-up because of high natural gas prices this winter will be able to choose to receive rebates on their highest four consecutive months of natural gas usage from January 1 to August 31, 2001.

"This summer program, combined with the ongoing electricity rebate program, will assist these users to partially offset increased energy costs this summer," adds McClellan. "With the recently announced payment for year 2000 production of $10.29 per cultivated acre and 40 cents per square foot for covered crops, it adds much needed relief for these agricultural users."

The rebated amount is initially $3.75 per gigajoule, but may vary depending on gas prices. The intent of the rebate programs is to keep natural gas costs equitable for summer and winter users. Since gas costs were higher in the winter, the rebate was higher. As gas prices are predicted to average around $7.25 to $7.75 per gigajoule this summer, the rebate amount is smaller, keeping it equitable with what winter users received. Rebates for propane and diesel used for irrigation pumping are 10 cents per litre and 15 cents per litre, respectively.

Most natural gas users will not have to apply for the rebates. These will be applied automatically to their natural gas accounts. As with the winter rebate program, propane and diesel users will apply on a special form that will be available shortly at Alberta Agriculture district offices, MLA constituency offices, Alberta Treasury Branches, registry offices and Agriculture Financial Services Corporation offices. More information is available by calling Alberta Connects toll-free at 310-4455 or by visiting the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: *John Knapp*
Program Services
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-9167

Government numbers are toll-free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first.

Legislation protects rural farm implement dealers

Two bills drafted to improve protection for farm implement dealers and the province's producers were introduced in the Legislature on May 7, 2001.

Bill 12, ***The Farm Implement Amendment Act, 2001*** harmonizes current legislation with the other prairie provinces and will enhance interprovincial trade. It standardizes sales and lease agreements and amends the obligations of distributors to the dealers at the time of termination of a dealer's agreement. This bill was introduced by Doug Horner, MLA for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

"These amendments will help Alberta synchronize with the other prairie provinces," says Horner. "Hopefully, this will help make things a lot simpler for farmers purchasing equipment across provincial boundaries."

Bill 13, ***The Farm Implement Dealerships Act, 2001*** will prevent farm implement distributors from terminating dealership agreements without cause. Without this legislation a distributor can restrict the operations or even shut down a dealership with little or no notice or reason.

"Farm implement dealers are important to rural communities," says Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Minister Shirley McClellan. "Unnecessary closure of dealerships can create hardship for the farmers and community members who rely on that dealership for employment or for help ensuring their equipment remains operational."

Bill 13 was introduced by Dunvegan MLA Hector Goudreau. The legislation was developed in response to concerns brought forward by the farm equipment industry and by farmers who were concerned about losing many of the rural dealerships, forcing them to travel long distances for service and repair.

"This Act is modeled after Saskatchewan's Act and ensures dealerships are able to compete on a level playing field," adds Goudreau. "Now a dealership's fate lies in the hands of the market and their own business acumen, not in the hands of distributors."

The last several years have seen the farm implement industry go through several mergers and acquisitions resulting in fewer companies controlling most of the distribution. Major distributors are pressuring farm implement dealers to carry only their product. This legislation will allow farm implement dealerships more choice in the brands of equipment they carry, resulting in more competition and more selection and savings for farmers.

Contact: *Doug Horner*
MLA, Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert
(780) 415-9392

Hector Goudreau
MLA, Dunvegan
(780) 415-9421

Carolyn Makowecki
Farmers Advocate Office
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 427-2433

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

Fusarium Head Blight of cereals

Fusarium Head Blight (FHB), also known as scab or tombstone, is a fungal disease that is the most significant cereal disease in Manitoba and the mid-western U.S. Annual surveys conducted by the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) show a westward movement of this pathogen into Saskatchewan and Alberta.

"FHB caused problems in southeast Alberta in 1998 and 1999 in durum crops," says Dave Spencer, cereal and oilseed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Medicine Hat. "The dry weather experienced in 2000 in southern Alberta reduced the disease last year."

FHB affects wheat, barley, oats, rye, triticale and corn. It is especially prevalent in areas where warm, humid weather occurs during cereal flowering and through the soft dough stage, when the plants are most susceptible to infection.

"*Fusarium graminearum* is the most important causal agent of FHB," adds Spencer. "F. graminearum reduces yield and grade and may also contaminate the grain with fungal toxins called mycotoxins such as deoxynivalenol (DON). DON may result in reduced feed consumption or feed refusal, and non-ruminants are particularly sensitive."

F. graminearum overwinters mainly on infected crop residue, but can also be seed borne. Infections in wheat occurs during flowering, via wind-borne spores produced from infested crop residue. About two weeks later, symptoms become visible on infected heads. Moist conditions resulting from irrigation, dew and rainfall and moderate temperatures during flowering are critical for infection to occur. Symptoms initially appear as dead, prematurely ripened portions of the cereal head. An orange or pinkish discolouration on affected portions of the head may also be apparent. After harvest, infected kernels can range in appearance from shriveled and chalky white (called fusarium damaged kernels) to symptomless, depending on the time of infection.

"To minimize FHB use disease-free seed," says Spencer. "Plant only seed that has a negative test for F. graminearum. Seed treatment should be used to help minimize the risk of seedling blight caused by this and other pathogens."

Crop rotation and seeding dates can also play a role in preventing FHB. Planting cereals no more often than once in three years will reduce the risk of spreading the disease. A good rotation allows enough time for infested residue to decompose before the next cereal crop is seeded.

"Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has initiated a program that encourages farmers to test seed for FHB," says Spencer. "Alberta Agriculture will pay a portion of the cost to test samples of wheat and barley seed for *Fusarium graminearum* at approved labs. To offset the cost of the test for farmers, Alberta Agriculture has committed $100,000 to this program. Three labs are participating in the program and will test seed for the presence of F. graminearum."

The testing program is underway and will run until June 30, 2001, depending on response. The cost of sample testing is $45 per sample: the farmer's cost is $20 and Alberta Agriculture's covers $25.

"Producers whose seed has been identified as infected will receive notice directly from the lab, as well as an information package on how to handle the remainder of the infected seed," says Shaffeek Ali, acting unit leader, pest prevention and management, Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "The results of individual tests will remain confidential. Alberta Agriculture will only be collecting information on infection rates in municipalities."

Eligible Alberta laboratories testing for F. graminearum:

- Agricore Seed Lab
  4722 - 39 Street, Camrose, AB T4V 0Z5
  1-800-463-2045
- BioVision Seed Research Ltd.
  9954 - 67 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T6E 0P5
  1-800-952-5407
- 20/20 Seed Labs
  Suite 201, 509 - 11 Avenue, Nisku, AB T9E 7N5
  1-877-420-2099

The Alberta Agriculture factsheet, ***Fusarium Head Blight of Barley and Wheat*** (Agdex # FS110/632-1) is available at all district offices and from the Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. This factsheet is also available in PDF format on the Alberta Agriculture web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca>.

More information on FHB is available on-line from:

Canadian Grain Commission
<http://www.cgc.ca/Pubs/fusarium/fusarium-e2.htm>

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
<http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/saf/>

Manitoba Agriculture
<http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/>

Contact:	*Dave Spencer*	*Shaffeek Ali*
	(403) 529-3616	*(780) 422-4909*

Quick tips for seeding field pea

Many producers are turning their attention to alternative. Field pea is one of the crops that has grown in popularity in recent years and is being seeded this crop season.

"Producers considering field pea should make sure that they will be seeding into a clean field," says Sandra Taillieu, pulse and special crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds. "Field pea do not compete with thistle or dandelion, so a clean field is a prime consideration. It is also important to avoid fields with high levels of residual

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nitrogen. Excessive N increases vegetative growth that can aggravate the challenges of disease incidence and harvest management."

Other things producers should keep in mind, include:

- **Book inoculant early**!
- **Avoid desiccation of nitrogen-fixing rhizobia** – inoculate and sow into moist soil.
- **Check herbicide history** – residual herbicide problems can really hurt the crop.
- **Seed early** – field peas can be planted into soil that has warmed to five degrees Celsius at seeding depth. Field pea are relatively well adapted to cooler spring soil conditions. Early seeding is the best way to take advantage of Spring moisture and avoid yield losses from flower blast in the heat of July.
- **Seed into moisture** – field pea require more moisture to germinate than cereal and oilseeds because they are larger seeds. Spring moisture is critical to establishing a competitive pea crop. Be sure to cover pea seed with moist soil and achieve good seed to soil contact with proper packing. Seeding too shallow can result in a pea that has started to germinate becoming stranded in dry ground.
- **Choose a variety with small seed size** – the thousand seed weight (TSW) of field peas varies from variety to variety and from seed lot to seed lot within a variety. This variability can have significant impact on the volume of seed needed to attain an adequate plant stand, not to mention the cost of seeding.
- **Calculate seeding rates based on specific seed lot** – use clean, disease-free, high-vigor seed. Calculate plants per square foot EMERGED using the tested germination and measured thousand seed weight for that particular seed lot.

$$\text{Seeding Rate} = \frac{[\ 7 \text{ plants/ft}^2 \times \text{TSW (g)}]}{(\text{Germ-Seedling Mortality}) \times 10}$$

- **Handle seed with care** – mechanical damage to pea seed affects vigor and reduces germination. Field pea should be cleaned off the combine (ideal at least 16 per cent moisture) and then put into aeration. Fan speeds on the airseeder should be adjusted high enough to move seed through the system while trying to avoid mechanical damage. Check the condition of the peas that have come through the seeder. Visible cracks are an indication of more damage to seed than wanted.
- **Consider seed treating and starter phosphorus** – seed treatments can protect your pea crop from the risk of seed rots and seedling blights in cool/wet Spring soil conditions. Fields with low P or cool soil conditions may show crop response to starter P.

More information about field pea is available in ***Pulse Crops In Alberta*** (Agdex #142/20-1). This 150-page comprehensive manual, complete with full-colour pages on the major pulse crops, was written by Alberta Agriculture's pulse crop specialists. Cost of the manual is $25 (plus GST). It is available at all Alberta Agriculture district offices and at Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or by phoning toll-free 1-800-292-5697. For mail orders, add $2 for shipping and handling (plus GST).

Contact: Sandra Taillieu
(403) 556-4220

Flea beetle already attacking horticultural crops

As predicted by the provincial entomologist Dr Lloyd Dosdall, Alberta's warm dry spring weather is already a proving to be a haven for flea beetles. Large numbers of flea beetles have been observed feeding on cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower transplants and rhubarb in the Edmonton area. If this trend continues, flea beetle population will reach economic injury levels in many horticultural crops especially in areas with large acreage of canola and cole crops.

"Flea beetles are small, dark, jumping beetles that over winter as adults under leaf litter along fence lines and shelter belts," says Jamie Motta, entomology technologist, entomology program at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "Most crop damage occurs in the spring when adult beetles emerge and begin feeding on cotyledons and the first true leaves of young plants. Late maturing vegetable crops such as potatoes, tomatoes, peppers and sugar beets can become heavily infested in the fall because the leaves remain green for a longer period. Flea beetle damage is easily recognized. The adults chew small round holes in the leaves giving the plant a *shot hole* appearance. Extensive feeding during hot and dry conditions may destroy an entire crop during the early stages of development."

Producers can reduce flea beetle injury by increasing seeding rate and controlling cruciferous weeds such as flixweed, stinkweed and wild mustards prior to emergence or transplanting of the crop. Sprinkler irrigation applied during warm dry conditions will drown the adult beetles and improve crop development and vigor making the crop less susceptible to feeding damage.

"For crops such as broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower that require cosmetic protection, there are several chemical insecticides on the market proven effective against flea beetles," adds Motta. "Chemical control should be employed

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when the first shot holes appear on the leaves. Growers should frequently monitor crops for flea beetle damage during the early stages of crop development to ensure early detection and successful control."

For more information on control practices of flea beetles or other insect pests of horticultural crops, contact Kwesi Ampong-Nyarko (780) 415- 2316 or Jamie Motta (780) 415-2320.

Contact:	*Jamie Motta*	*Kwesi Ampong-Nyarko*
	Entomology technologist	*Entomologist*
	(780) 415-2320	*(780) 415-2316*

Agri-News Briefs

Foreign Animal Disease seminars

A series of seminars dealing with Foreign Animal Diseases (FADs) is open to all livestock producers. The seminars are led by the Canadian Animal Health Coalition (CAHC). FADs are highly contagious and have lasting impact upon animal health, economics and often human health. Key topics being covered include: FADs, what they are and how they impact animals, the economy and humans; the importance of Canada's animal health status; Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) response policies in the event of an FAD outbreak; emergency management plans; and, biosecurity both locally and nationally. The seminars are being held in:

- Red Deer – May 22 at the Westerner Park, Harvest Centre
- Lethbridge – May 23 at the Lethbridge Lodge
- Edmonton – May 24 at the Delta Inn South

There is no registration fee for attending the seminars. For further information, contact Matt Taylor, secretariat, CAHC, (403) 210-1856.

Livestock Care Conference 2001

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, the Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) and the University of Calgary are sponsoring ***Livestock Care Conference 2001*** on June 7, 2001 at the Libin Theatre, U of C, Calgary. The theme of the conference is ***The Increasing Profile of Farm Animal Welfare in North America***. Speakers include: Janice Swanson, Kansas State University, Dept. of Animal Science; David Fraser, University of British Columbia, Animal Welfare Centre; Thomas Blaha, School of Veterinary Medicine, Hanover, Germany; and Duane Landals, Alberta Veterinary Medical Association. Registration is $60 per person (includes lunch and GST). For further information or to register, contact AFAC by phone (403) 932-8050, fax (403) 932-8052 or e-mail <info@afac.ab.ca>.

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Agri-News

May 28, 2001

Grasshopper Risk – 2001

Alberta's ***Grasshopper Risk for 2001*** map, outlining the risk potential of hopper out-breaks throughout the province, is available. The map, generated by Dr. Lloyd Johnson at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Lethbridge Research Centre, uses data collected by fieldmen in over 1700 Alberta townships.

"Grasshoppers thrive in dry weather. It's no surprise that this year's threat of hopper outbreaks is rated as moderate to severe across practically 80 per cent of Alberta's agricultural production area," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's pest prevention and management unit, Edmonton. "In fact, when the grasshopper risk map is placed over precipitation maps, the potential for moderate to severe hopper outbreaks matches with the areas that have received less than 60 per cent of their average precipitation. The greatest threat is in areas that have received less than 40 per cent of average precipitation."

Producers facing severe risk include an area around Smoky Lake, Vegreville and Vermilion; further south in the area northeast of Lethbridge bordered by Nanton, Fort Macleod and Taber; and the Milk River and Warner area.

"The largest area at high risk for a severe hopper outbreak is in central Alberta in a line from Red Deer, Strathmore to Brooks running east to the border and into Saskatchewan," adds Calpas. "The area in the middle, bordered by Castor, Drumheller, Hussar to Oyen is rated at very severe risk from hoppers."

Producers are advised to monitor their fields and roadsides for grasshoppers. The economic thresholds for control are reached when hopper numbers exceed 13 hoppers per square meter in the field and 25 per square meter in the roadside. However, the economic thresholds are reduced when plants are under drought stress and are unable to compensate for any feeding injury. Significant crop loss can occur with lower numbers of grasshoppers. Control may be required at lower levels, 7 to 12 hoppers in the field, 13 to 24 in the roadside ditches.

"Growers are also advised to contact their local crop specialists for advice on making control decisions, and control options," says Calpas. "If the province starts to get some much needed rain, the threat of grasshopper outbreaks will be reduced."

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The map is accessible on the internet at <http://res2.agr.ca/lethbridge/scitech/dlj/hop2001_DJ_sm.jpg>.

To link to the map site from the main Alberta Agriculture page, click on *Pests and Diseases*, then *Plant Insects*, then *Cereal Crops* and finally *2001 Grasshopper Forecast.*

If you do not have access to the internet, visit any Alberta Agriculture district office and they will be happy to print a copy of the map for you.

Contact: Jim Calpas
(780) 422-4911

Alberta's moisture conditions

Current moisture conditions are below normal in much of the province, with severely dry conditions in many parts of north central, east central, and southeastern Alberta. Many areas had record or near record lows for winter precipitation.

"About 90 per cent of the agricultural area in the province does not have enough moisture to support crops. On average, in any year, about one third of the agricultural area has low moisture reserves," explains Allan Howard, soil moisture specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Since most of our annual precipitation comes during the growing season, there is still a chance the situation will improve, but the province will need well-timed, above normal rainfall if we are to expect average yields."

Snow storms during late March and early April did provide enough moisture to raise soil moisture levels to near normal west of Calgary and Lethbridge.

"There is also an area in the north central Peace Region where moisture reserves are near normal," says Joe Michielsen, soil moisture technologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "There are large areas of the province that do not have enough soil moisture for seed germination. These include the Drumheller – Medicine Hat area, an area from Oyen to Consort, and a large area that extends from Red Deer north through Edmonton, Barrhead to Athabasca and east to St. Paul."

The rest of the province has enough moisture for germination, but rain is needed soon to sustain the crop during early growth. Winds have dried out the seedbed in much of this area, so conditions have deteriorated.

"Growers in drier areas need to closely monitor the moisture situation. Both crop and livestock producers should be considering what options they could pursue if they don't get moisture soon," says Michielsen. "Questions such as seeding date, crop selection and fertilizer rates are on the minds of crop producers, while livestock producers are concerned about feed and water supplies. In irrigation districts, both crop and livestock producers are watching reservoirs and water allocation."

Alberta Agriculture has published the ***2001 Spring Soil Moisture Map***. The map and an accompanying one-page report are available on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/sustain/climate/index.html>. To view the report and map, click on *Spring/Fall Soil Moisture*. Printed copies of the map and report are available by contacting Michielsen at (403) 381-5859.

"Over 250 fields across Alberta, from the U.S. border to High Level, were sampled," explains Michielsen. "Conditions have deteriorated over most of the province since May 1 because of drying winds and cultivation. Spring showers may have had a minimal benefit where they occurred. As of May 14, no report or indication of any appreciable precipitation in Alberta has been received.

"Although the provincial map is a useful tool for general information, producers are encouraged to sample their own fields for specific field conditions."

Contact: Allan Howard *(780) 427-3594*

Joe Michielsen *(403) 381-5859*

Pasture School, it's about grazing management

The Western Forage Beef Group (WFBG) is holding its fourth WFBG Pasture School in Lacombe on June 19 to 21. The combination of scientific and practical grazing management, economics and underlying environmental benefits, attracts producers from across western Canada, some participants coming from as far away as Prince Edward Island.

"The WFBG Pasture School is designed for grazers who are already practicing improved grazing management and want to practice it at a higher level," explains Grant Lastiwka, pasture agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and WFBG in Lacombe. "The school is geared towards the Parkland grazing area in western Canada. Although it can't be all things to all people, the WFBG is always striving to deliver the best possible course to this target audience."

Scheduled over three intensive days, the school includes classroom instruction, field sessions, farm tours and networking. Dr. Vern Baron, forage physiologist/agronomist with Agriculture Canada, Lacombe, leads the first morning, covering the topics of understanding grass and legume growth, and pasture production. Participants move to the field in the afternoon, with speakers discussing pasture rejuvenation and grazing.

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Jim Bauer, well-respected rancher and manager of Grassland Consulting, combines practice and science, linking the information together and reviewing key grazing principles. Later in the afternoon, Myron Bjorge, provincial forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Lacombe, along with a support team, leads an informal discussion identifying key pasture species. In the evening, Duane McCartney and Christoph Weder share their findings on the grass finished beef industry from their recent trip to South America.

Day two and three have sessions on pasture planning, pasture nutrient/fertility cycling, grazing annuals or swaths, grazing nutrition, matching the cow to the grass and extending the grazing session.

"In the evening of day two, a key session on pasture economics is being delivered by Lorne Erickson, forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Rimbey. If producers can't profit from pasture management, they wouldn't be doing it, nor could they be financially able to improve the environmental resource they manage," says Lastiwka. "With improved profits and environmentally sound information, producers can afford to continue being even better environmental managers."

A real school highlight is a field tour of the leading-edge grazing operations Brian and Gail Luce and Jan and Marianne Slomp. These two operations represent a cross-section of the tools used in pasture management. A final session on pasture assessments ties the three days together. "These field components integrate the scientific and practical concepts, and help producers apply what they have been learning to their own operations," says Lastiwka.

The school is accredited by the Society for Range Management and sponsored by the WFBG, the Alberta Cattle Commission, the Alberta Forage Council (AFC), the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) program and several key pasture agri-businesses.

"We support the school because it provides a high level of education for people wanting to know more about grazing and pasture management, including many of our members," explains Richard De Bruijn, AFC manager. The mandate of AFC is to encourage sustainable and profitable uses of forages and grasslands through awareness and information exchange. Its membership includes the 10 forage associations in Alberta and their members.

"The key issue for the forage industry right now is environmental sustainability because of the trend towards environmental farm planning," says De Bruijn. "Pasture management is the weak link in growing the beef herd in Alberta, so the more we can improve productivity of pastures, the greater the benefit for the industry."

Along with three days of sessions and tours, participants receive a comprehensive set of resources materials covering session presentations, related reference information, key contacts and a list of related internet sites.

"We're pleased to have private industry sponsors who realize the importance of pasture management, sponsor portions of the resource manual and be part of the resource pool for participants," says Lastiwka.

A maximum of 54 participants are accepted for the program. This year, as in previous years, the school is already full. Contact your local Alberta Agriculture office to find out about other grazing workshops being held in the province this summer. Or, contact Lastiwka or Cathy Hendrickson to get information on the June 2002 Western Forage/Beef Group Pasture School.

Contact:	*Grant Lastiwka*	*Cathy Hendrickson*
	(403) 782-8028	*(403) 782-8030*

Essential oils, diversification on the farm

Crop diversification has been one of the most over-used phrases of the last 10 years in the farm news. The definition of crop diversification is simply to grow a wide range of different crop species for benefit – agronomic and, hopefully, economic. In Western Canada, some of the latest crops added to the rotation have been field pea and chickpea.

"While the concept of diversification sounds good in theory, simply growing another crop on the farm is not truly diversification," says Mark Olson, pulse and special crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "The perennial problem is that prairie farmers are trapped into growing bulk commodities, shipping them out of the country with very little added value, other than the occasional cleaning and bagging. Essential oils may be a way to add to the diversity of the crops grown and add value at the same time."

What are essential oils? They are compounds extracted from the flower, bark, seed, leaves or roots of plants that are used in the flavor and fragrance industry. Crops that have been grown in Alberta for essential oils include peppermint, spearmint, coriander, caraway, dill, monarda, anise-hyssop, summer savory, sage, tarragon, and basil. Testing has also been done on trees and wild plants such as black spruce, balsam poplar and yarrow.

The primary markets for the essential oils are the food, beverage and perfume companies. In recent years, there has been a growing demand for essential oils in the aromatherapy industry.

"Farmers thinking of getting into essential oils need to spend considerable time doing market research," adds Olson. "Discussion with buyers well before crops are planted and signing written agreements or contracts is necessary."

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When considering essential oil production, there are hundreds if not thousands of plants to chose from. It is wise to evaluate at least a half dozen, to offset risk. Generally, the higher the price of the essential oil, the lower per cent oil extraction there is from the plant or the quantity of the plant available. Essential oil quality and quantity is affected by variety, state of maturity, part of plant harvested, climate, soil, light, temperature, water and nutrients.

Questions that need to be researched before diversifying into essential oils, are;

- What essential oils are in short supply in the world?
- Is the plant adapted to our climate and what are the agronomic practices associated with it?
- What are the costs of the extraction unit and what profit margin do I need/want to make?
- Is the oil yield high enough of this plant to turn a profit and is there buyer acceptance of this quality from my location?
- What is the size of the market and who are my competitors in the local/national/world market?

Essential oils may be removed from plants in one of four methods; hydro (water) distillation, steam distillation, solvent extraction and supercritical extraction.

"While the term extraction may sound foreboding to some farmers, removing essential oils from plants has been going on for centuries throughout the world," says Olson. "Of all the methods, steam distillation is one of the easiest to set up on the farm with least amount of money invested. Any scale of operation may be set up, depending on what the individual wants to accomplish."

Recently, the Alberta New Crops Network (ANCN) in conjunction with a host of other partners, built a portable steam distillation unit. Testing to determine quality and quantity (yield) of locally grown crops, trees and wild plants, has started and will continue on through the summer. For more information on the portable distiller, contact Heather Kehr, chairman of the Essential Oil Committee of ANCN at (780) 795-2649.

Essential oils do appear to have a bright future for those farmers wanting to truly diversify. For further information call Olson at 403-782-3301.

Additional information on the market potential for essential oils can be found on Alberta Agriculture's web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/economic/market/herbsarticle.html>.

Contact: Mark Olson
(403) 782-3301

Summer cooking safety help

Summer is a time when we need to be more aware about handling perishable foods safely. During the warmer months, there is predictably more food-related illness.

"Summer is the high season for foodborne illness because of warm weather, more casual food handling and improper cooking," says Jane Carlyle, coordinator, Food Safety Info Line, Calgary. "Warmer weather is ideal for the multiplication of any disease-causing bacteria, that can be present in food. Food storage, preparation and cooking facilities are often less than adequate at parks and campgrounds."

Here are a few basic safety steps for safer summer foods:

- Keep perishable foods such as meat, poultry, eggs, dairy products and prepared foods such as salads colder than 4°C/40°F. Defrost and marinate food in the refrigerator.
- After eating, get perishable foods back in the refrigerator or cooler as soon as possible.
- Be sure meat, poultry and fish are cooked to the proper temperature. An instant read thermometer is recommended for measuring the temperature of cooked foods, including burgers.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling or eating food.
- Be sure work surfaces, cutting boards and utensils are clean.
- Put cooked food on clean plates rather than on the plates that held raw food.
- Thoroughly wash all fruits and vegetables under running water before packing them in a cooler or serving them.

"The **Food Safety Info Line** has published factsheets on food safety," says Carlyle. "Consumers can get a factsheet on how to barbecue safely; more detailed information about the proper cooked temperature for meat, poultry and fish; and additional hot weather food safety handling tips. This information is available by calling the toll-free Food Safety Info Line at 1-800-892-8333."

The Food Safety Info Line is staffed by professional home economists and is answered Monday through Friday. Messages received by 4:00 p.m. (Mountain Time) are returned the same day. The Food Safety Info Line is a not-for-profit organization providing western Canadians with direct access to current, credible food safety information, science based information resources and public education.

For further information, contact Jane Carlyle, coordinator, Food Safety Info Line, Box 21, Site 1, R.R.#7, Calgary, Alberta T2P 2G7.

Contact: Jane Carlyle
1-800-892-8333

What you need to know about selling into Farmers' Markets

Many agri-preneural Albertans are looking for new methods to market their products. Some use the Farmers' Market system to sell products directly to the consumer.

"Selling direct for many family farms allows them to retain ownership of their product, develop a customer base, involve other family members in the operation, diversify, develop and promote new value-added products," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "There are 102 Farmers' Markets in Alberta. Some of these markets are well established and almost impossible to access, but many markets are still growing. Many urban markets are prospering and for some producers this can offer great returns."

Albertans looking to sell a product through a Farmers' Market are generally referred to as a vendor. The more vendors that participate in a market, the more appeal that market has and the more customers it draws. Vendors need to realize that other vendors aren't necessarily competitors. Cooperative competition (co-opetition) is necessary for a market to be successful.

"Vendor space varies with the market," adds Engel. "The decision of where a vendor is located is determined by a market manager. Some assign permanent spots and some follow a first come first serve rule. From a customer's point of view, it is often appreciated when a favorite vendor has a consistent location."

To get ready to sell at a Farmers' Market there are a few things that should be investigated:

- Local regulations – contact the Regional Health Authority covering the market being investigated. Get a copy of Alberta Agriculture's factsheet ***Farm Direct Sales: Know the Regulations*** (Agdex # 845-7). It is available through Alberta Agriculture's district offices; the publications office at 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6; or, on-line at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/800/845-7.html>.
- What supplies are needed – tables, covers, tents, bags, containers, boxes or clean up supplies. This varies depending on the location of market. Be sure to find out what is needed.
- The market's rules, regulations and fees – find out the market manager's phone number. Remember that for most markets the manager job is voluntary.
- Display needs – well-kept displays are necessary and indicate high quality products.
- Check out the market's insurance – as an individual vendor, check farm/personal policies concerning sales in a farmers' market situation.
- Check into joining the Alberta Farmers' Market Association – the market manager will have information on this or contact the Crop Diversification Centre North at (780) 422-1789.

Some of the larger markets in Alberta, for example St. Albert, Strathcona and Millarville, have been successful at turning their markets into events. They have become Saturday morning destinations. They are customer focused. Giving the customers what they want.

Some markets hold special events like contests, demonstrations, artisan displays, and information sessions on preparation, storage, preservation and recipes. Knowing the market, how it's run, what special features may be part of the event ahead of time will make your first Farmers' Market vendor experience easier.

For a complete listing of farmers' markets in Alberta, check out <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/store/farmersmarket/index.html>.

Listings are also available at Alberta Agriculture district offices. For more information on farm direct marketing contact the local rural development specialist-business or check out the diversification section of Alberta Agriculture's website <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

Contact one of Alberta Agriculture's rural development specialists – business:

Kerry Engel	Westlock	(780) 349-4465
Lori-Jo Graham	Claresholm	(403) 625-1445
Lisa Houle	Hanna	(403) 854-5500
Sharon Homeniuk	Stony Plain	(780) 963-6101
Tim Keating	Falher	(780) 837-2211
Slav Heller	St. Paul	(780) 645-6301
Donna Fleury	Airdrie	(403) 948-8537
Janice McGregor	Morinville	(780) 939-4351
Leona Reynolds-Zayak	Vermilion	(780) 853-8101
Linda Hawk	Medicine Hat	(403) 529-3616
Lynn Stegman	Red Deer	(403) 340-7010
Jan Warren	Vulcan	(780) 485-2236
Marian Williams	Camrose	(780) 679-1210

Agri-News Briefs

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Livestock Care Conference 2001

Sponsored by AFAC, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the University of Calgary, the Livestock Care Conference 2001 is being held at the University of Calgary Health Sciences Centre, Libin Theatre, on June 7, from 8:30am to 4:30pm. The theme of the conference is ***The Increasing Profile of Farm Animal Welfare in North America.*** The conference is organized into four sessions:

- Now Ordering: Fast Food companies are dictating farm animal welfare practice across North America
- Farm Animal Welfare HACCAP: Can we build farm animal welfare into quality assurance programs?
- Bio-Engineered Livestock: The impact and the welfare of bio-engineered animals
- Learned Behaviors and Management Practices: The impact of environmental factors and routine treatment procedures on farm animals.

The agenda, filled with experts on animal care from across Canada and the U.S., deals with the issues and day-to-day concerns livestock operation managers face every day. Registration is $60 per person (includes lunch and GST). To register, contact AFAC at (403) 932-8050 or e-mail <info@afac.ab.ca>.

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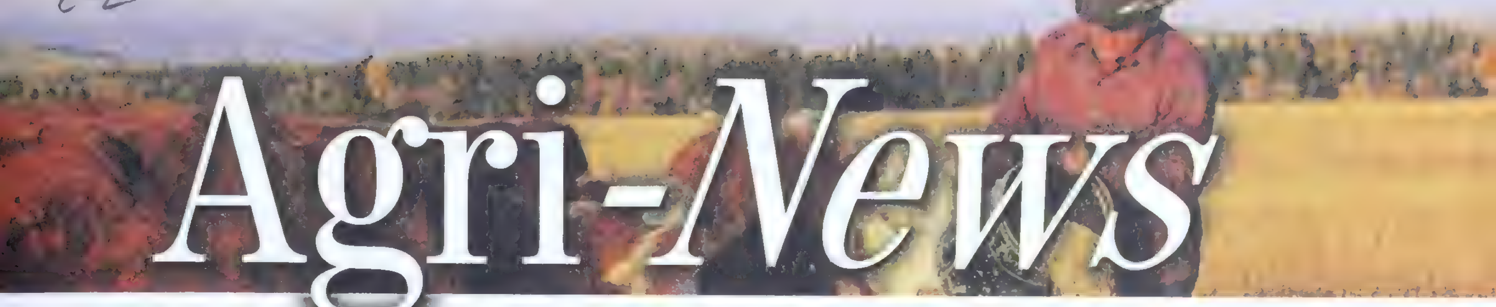

Agri-News

June 4, 2001

Food safety: a consumer demand and a processor responsibility

Those pickled carrots are a perennial favorite at the church bazaar. Friends and family rave about home-made barbecue sauce and salad dressings. Someone comments that 'this stuff really should be bottled and sold'. It sounds easy, but it is not. There are many steps involved in taking a product to market, and the most important consideration is food safety.

"Whether you are an emerging business selling at an Alberta Approved Farmers' Market or a growing business selling products into retail stores, marketing to the public carries a lot of responsibility," says Joyce Lencucha, agri food development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "Of course, the product has to taste good, but it also has to be free of contamination. When selling food to consumers, you have a responsibility to ensure that the food is safe and wholesome."

It doesn't matter whether it's pickled carrots, a barbecue sauce, or a pineapple-rutabaga cake being marketed, the change from feeding family and friends to providing for general public consumption, makes you a food processor. Even in a small operation, there are several precautions that can be easily taken to avoid a large disaster.

"For instance, processors should take the time to carefully and completely analyze their process," adds Lencucha. "Check for potential trouble spots – places where contamination could happen. Then decide what steps and equipment are needed to prevent the contamination."

Following the *Good Manufacturing Practices* outlined for food processors, enables you to identify how the work premises, the equipment used and the personnel will affect the product's integrity and safety. Other guidelines found within this document, such as manufacturing controls, sanitation programs, managing records and product recalls, as well as the transportation and storage of processed food are important for food safety.

"Personnel hygiene plays an important part in the production of safe food products," says Lencucha. "Food handlers should always wear clean, readily washable outer garments and head gear that confines the hair and that is only used in the processing area. They should never handle food if they have

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

cuts, abrasions, feel sick, have a cold or the flu. They should be told how and when to wash their hands. Many individuals are not aware that hands must be washed for a full 20 seconds with soap and hot water to prevent contamination of food with harmful bacteria. There should be no smoking where food is prepared, stored or displayed."

Ordinary household bleach is a very effective sanitizing agent. Use one tablespoon of bleach in a gallon of hot water (2 mL in a litre of water) to wipe counters, cutting boards and other work surfaces. Use this same solution to soak kitchen cloths.

The video ***Safe Food Practices for Small Processors*** outlines the basics of good manufacturing practices and points out a number of action steps food processors can follow to make certain their product is safe. To borrow the video, please visit the local Alberta Agriculture office, or contact Ken Blackley, information officer with Alberta Agriculture's multi-media library, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, phone (780) 422-3951.

Alberta Agriculture also has a number of resources for people interested in food processing. For more information call Lencucha at (403) 340-5358 in Red Deer or Suzanne Tenold at (403) 948-8504 in Airdrie. Alberta government numbers are toll free in the province by dialing (403) 310-000 and then the number.

Contact:	*Joyce Lencucha*	*Suzanne Tenold*
	(403) 340-5358	*(403) 948-8504*

Rural Safety Program focuses on youth

The County of Thorhild Agricultural Service Board successfully applied for funding to develop and host a Rural Safety Program for students in the County of Thorhild. This one-day program takes place on June 14, 2001 at the Thorhild Agriplex and Thorhild Community Association facilities.

"The goal of the program is to promote rural safety awareness and accident prevention to students in grades Kindergarten through eight within the County of Thorhild," says Carol Kassian, manager and public relations with Rural Safety, Thorhild. "Approximately 410 students will be attending the Rural Safety Workshop."

The students will be divided in to age-related groups and will rotate around different information and demonstration stations throughout the day. The day will conclude with a large-scale enactment of a farm accident/emergency response scenario. Lunch and snacks will be provided for all participants.

The information and demonstration stations include: tractor/baler demonstration, combine and grain demonstration, lawn maintenance equipment, recreational equipment, livestock, chemical safety, health concerns, water safety and electrical safety. Also, at some of the stations, local area residents that are farm accident survivors will be on hand to talk to the students about their injuries and how they occurred.

"Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, local businesses and farmers have been of great assistance in offering their time, money, equipment and knowledge to share with the students," adds Kassian. "The planning committee hopes the outcome of the program will be the increased awareness and knowledge of safe farm practices among the youth of the County. If this increased awareness prevents just one injury or fatality, the committee's goal will have been achieved."

"I am delighted to see community driven, safety/injury prevention initiatives, that in the long-run are beneficial for all of us," says Solomon Kyeremanteng, manager of Alberta Agriculture's farm safety program, Edmonton. "We are sowing the seeds of farm safety and will eventually harvest a safe place to grow."

Contact:	*Carol Kassian*	*Solomon Kyeremanteng*
	(780) 398-3978	*(780) 427-4227*

Grass seed production research at CDCS

The Grass Seed and Forage Production program has been conducting research at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS) since 1987. Different grass species are being investigated to determine which ones are suitable as diversified crop options in the irrigated areas of Alberta. Several species, tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass, are showing economic promise for both turf and forage grass seed production.

"Good opportunities exist for producers who can consistently grow quality grass seed," says Henry Najda, research scientist, grass seed production, at Alberta Agriculture's CDCS, Brooks. "Traditional production areas in Europe and the Pacific Northwest are shrinking due to population growth and the production of higher value crops. This is forcing contracting companies to look to other areas for grass seed production. Alberta is an ideal location, close to the U.S. and Pacific Rim markets, and the Canadian dollar, favorable for the export market, provides producers a crop option to low cereal prices."

Currently, research is focusing on companion cropping, fertility requirements and herbicides. One of the major stumbling blocks in grass seed production in the province is the availability of registered herbicides. A cooperative project led by Dan Cole, weed specialist with Alberta Agriculture's agronomy unit in Edmonton, is evaluating suitable fall applied

Cont'd on page 3

herbicides that could be used on creeping red fescue, chewings fescue, tall fescue, hard fescue, perennial ryegrass, timothy and Kentucky bluegrass. These trials are being conducted by Calvin Yoder, forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture in the Peace River region, Dan Cole in the Edmonton area and at CDCS in Brooks.

"Fertility research is being done to establish benchmark levels of nitrogen required to economically produce seed of various species under irrigation," says Najda. "Management practices are also being developed for companion cropping of grasses where only a single seed crop is expected, as in perennial ryegrass."

Along with the agronomic research being done, the Western Grass Seed Testing program identifies varieties and species that are economically worthwhile for seed production in the various regions of the province. This testing program, administered by staff at CDCS, is a cooperative trial with the other western provinces.

Contact: Henry Najda *Shelley Barkley*
(403) 362-1346 (403) 362-1305

Employer's Handbook for Agriculture and Horticulture

The ***Employer's Handbook for Agriculture and Horticulture*** is very practical and is designed to provide information and training material for employers to improve their human resource management skills. The 180-page handbook is available as a free download and can be found on Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web site, at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/hr/index.html>.

"Written as a guide to owners, managers and supervisors in agricultural and horticultural operations, the handbook will help in recruiting better employees; supervising staff; motivating and training employees to reach desired performance; and, disciplining and dismissing employees," says Douglas Taylor, program consultant with Alberta Agriculture's Green Certificate. "The handbook can be used to help achieve sound human resource management practices within an operation that can result in increased productivity, reduced staff turnover and satisfied employees and managers."

The handbook is arranged in five sections. At the end of some sections, there are working copies of worksheets that may be of further help. The five sections are:

- **Human resource planning and regulations** – describes the human resource planning process. Helps when making decisions regarding how many and what type of employees are required. This sections also advises on which regulations apply to hiring and employment practices.
- **Hiring** – outlines the process to follow when recruiting employees. There are 10 steps in the hiring process, and a flow-chart is included that illustrates the steps along with several critical communication activities associated with these steps.
- **Supervising** – is one of the key elements in a good employee-employer relationship. Skillful recruitment is the key to filling most employment situations. Good employee-employer relations is the key to keeping those skillful employees.
- **Training, motivating and evaluating** – discusses several ways managers can promote high level performance from workers by developing worker ability through training, creating a motivational climate, and paying fare wages and benefits. A constructive exchange of information through performance evaluations can lead to enhancement of both ability and motivation.
- **Communications, problem solving and disciplining** – while good communication can avoid many problems, when conflict or the need for discipline does arise, it must be dealt with. This section also discusses how to approach that dreaded task of dismissing an employee.

For more information on the handbook, contact Taylor at (780) 427-4183.

Contact: Douglas Taylor
(780) 427-4183

One farmer's trash is another farmer's treasure

The very dry conditions experienced at seeding time throughout central Alberta in 2001 have made farmers take another look at the value of standing stubble and other crop residues. The absence of moisture during late April and early May was also accompanied by several days of strong and persistent winds. These conditions, along with low relative humidity, quickly dried the surface of fields with exposed soil.

"Farmers who direct seed, and left last years stubble upright and anchored to the soil, were able to reduce the drying effect of the wind and preserve soil moisture," says Rick Taillieu, Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Olds. "Crop stubble greatly reduces the wind speed at the soil surface, which greatly reduces the rate of evaporation. Other crop residue including chaff further reduces the rate of evaporation from fields are left undisturbed after harvest. The soil moisture that direct seeders were able to conserve allowed them to plant shallow into moisture. Producers that had cultivated the land were often forced to increase seeding depth in order to ensure adequate moisture for germination."

Cont'd on page 4

Direct seeded fields, especially when a low disturbance system was used, will continue to benefit from last year's crop residues. In addition to moisture conservation, stubble will help protect the land from wind erosion. Wind erosion not only strips the land of valuable topsoil but the sandblasting effects can also cause extensive damage to emerging and growing crops. This was the case in 1999 when several canola fields in Central Alberta were damaged to the point of having to reseed.

"The value of standing stubble does not stop at the surface," adds Taillieu. "If the root channels created by last year's crop are left undisturbed, they improve soil aeration and water infiltration rates. The considerably increased rate of water infiltration will allow the soil to absorb the rainfall into the soil profile and reduce run-off. Ponding may also be significantly reduced in the case of a heavy rainfall event."

Residue management is one of the foundations of a successful direct seeding system. Farmers who carefully manage their residue, starting at the combine, can reap the rewards of standing stubble while reducing difficulties seeding into standing stubble. In dry conditions, the rewards are the greatest as moisture is the limiting factor in attaining the most profitable yields. The 'trash' that played a negative role in the frosty spring of 2000 has become the 'treasure' in the fields of the dry 2001 seeding season.

Contact: Rick Taillieu
(403) 556-8235

Diagnostic field school gearing up for 2001

"We are losing anywhere from 10 to 40 per cent of our potential production on every acre of cropped land every year," says Elston Solberg, a research agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's agronomy unit. Solberg assists in planning and training at the Diagnostic Field School.

"If cattle producers were experiencing these types of losses it would be considered a disaster, but because the losses are from crops and not livestock, we gloss over them. These losses amount to billions of dollars annually."

In 1991 when it was initiated, the original concept behind the Diagnostic Field School was to provide an opportunity for students to observe crop production problems side by side. In this way, subtle differences could be observed in order that proper diagnostic techniques could be learned and potential corrective techniques implemented.

Being profitable in today's tough production climate is definitely a challenge. Add in the dry weather, insects, diseases, negative press, high input costs, low commodity prices and the ability to get things *right* or to fix things when they're *not right* becomes more important than ever. The ability to diagnose and correct in-field problems is extremely valuable.

"An expanded Diagnostic Field School is running from July 16 to August 3, 2001," adds Solberg. "Bookings for the 2001 season are currently being accepted. The school provides an interactive, hands-on learning experience that many have said instantly returns 10 times the investment of attendance."

More than 7000 of western Canada's best agronomists and farmers have been through the school, some many times. This year, people from diverse groups from as far away as Australia and Simon Fraser University are already registered. Registration is $150 and early registration is recommended.

Contact: Michele Dannish
(780) 422–3825
Elston Solberg
(780) 422-1222
Dale Soetaert
(780) 422-0885

Agri-News Briefs

Sun safety for babies and children

Too much sun can be harmful. A baby or child can sunburn in only 15 minutes. To keep children safe:

Cover up – if they are going to be out in the sun for extended periods of time, dress children in long sleeves and a hat. When buying sunglasses, make sure the are labeled ANSI or CSA approved, to provide almost 100 per cent protection against eye damage.

Keep them in the shade – when a shadow is shorter than the person casting it, the sun is very strong. Look for places with lots of shade, such as a park with lots of trees. Always take an umbrella to the beach. Always keep babies in the shade.

Use sunscreen – the bottle should be labeled SPF 15 or higher. SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor. Put sunscreen on the skin 20 minutes before sun exposure, even on a hazy day, and reapply every two hours. DO NOT apply sunscreen on babies less than six months old.

For further information, contact the Radiation Protection Bureau, Health Canada at (613) 954-6699, or visit their web site at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/rpb>.

2001: A Field Day Odyssey

The Lacombe Research Centre and Field Crop Development Centre are organizing the 2001: A Field Day Odyssey in Lacombe on August 2, 2001. The tentative program includes discussions on cereal quality, winter cereal production, crop health optimization and cereal varieties. The field day is sponsored by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Rainy Creek Soil Conservation Club and INFO Synergy. The field day is limited to 150 people. Deadline for registration is July 23, 2001. Registrations is $20 per person, please send fee along with registration to at the Lacombe Research Centre, 6000 C&E Trail, Lacombe, AB T4L 1W1. For further information, contact Roberta Galenzoski or Loree Verquin at the Lacombe Research Centre (403) 782-8100 (Ext. 0 or 114), fax: (403) 782-6120 or e-mail: <galenzoskir@em.agr.ca> or <verquinl@em.agr.ca>.

Alberta Dairy Congress

The 15th Annual Alberta Dairy Congress is being held at the Leduc Black Gold Centre, Leduc, on June 6 to 8, 2001. The theme of the congress is ***2001: A Milk Odyssey***. Running in conjunction with the congress is the Forage Competition. The six classes being considered in the competition are: Legume Hay (>70 per cent legume); Grass-Legume Hay Mix (<70 per cent legume); Grass Hay; Haylage; Cereal Silage; Export Hay (timothy); and Round Bale Silage. For further information about the Alberta Dairy Congress, contact the Alberta Dairy Congress by email at <abdairy@leduc-chamber.com> or visit their web site at <http://www.leduc-chamber.com/Default.htm>.

Coming Agricultural Events

June 2001

World Pork Expo
June 7 - 9
Iowa State Fairgrounds
Des Moines, Iowa, USA
Marilynn Rockwell – (515) 223-2600

Alberta Farm Animal Care (AFAC) – Livestock Care Conference
June 7
University of Calgary – Libin Theatre
Calgary
Alberta Farm Animal Care Association – (403) 932-8050

Farmers' Appreciation Day
June 8
Agriculture Centre
Airdrie
Russie Anderson – (403) 948-8503

Association of Alberta Co-op Seed Cleaning Plants Regional Meetings
June 12 - 20

June 12	Nanton – Community Centre
June 13	Olds – Legion Hall
June 14	Camrose – Exhibition Grounds
June 15	Lougheed – Community Hall
June 18	Myrnam – Seniors Centre
June 19	Warburg – Community Centre
June 20	Grande Prairie – Trumpeter Motor Inn

Bill Witbeck – (403) 782-4641

Between Generations 2001
June 13
Dalton's Conference Centre, Greenwood Inn, Calgary
Karen Carson – (403) 556-4218

Cooperative Program In Agricultural Marketing and Business Symposium 2001
June 13
Rm N2-115, Education Bldg, U of A Campus, Edmonton
Ellen Goddard – (780) 492-4225

Between Generations 2001
June 14
Capri Hotel Convention & Trade Centre
Red Deer
Karen Carson – (403) 556-4218

Peace Regional 4-H Days
June 15 - 17
Evergreen Park
Grande Prairie
Stacy Murray – (780) 835-2241

Agricultural Fair
June 17
Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village
Edmonton
Shirley – (780) 6623640

Ontario Pork Congress
June 21 - 22
Stratford Fairgrounds
Stratford, Ontario
Jean Smelski – (519) 625-8811

Bison Conference – Marketing – Beyond Production
June 22 - 24
Lethbridge Community College
Lethbridge
Dave Kelly – (403) 317-7362

Annual Peace River Lamb Association (PRLA) Bar-b-que
June 25
Savannah
Jerry Sylvester – (780) 971-2070

Livestock Options for the Future
June 25 - 27
Delta Winnipeg Hotel
Winnipeg, MB
Jan Palmer – (204) 268-6228

The Bluffton Heifer Challenge 2001
June 30
Rimbey Agricultural Grounds
Rimbey
Tenielle Gilchrist – (403) 843-6938

POSTPONED TO 2002
International Farm Management Congress 2001
Wageningen, The Netherlands
J. Wilson Loree – (403) 556-4213

July 2001

Peace Region Forage Seed Association Summer Tour – BC
July 9
Clayhurst, BC
Sandra Burton – (250) 789-6885

Peace Region Forage Seed Association Summer Tour – AB
July 10
Meet at the Deadwood Community Hall Manning
Calvin Yoder – (780) 864-3507

Canadian National Junior Angus Show
July 12 - 14
Bashaw Agricultural Grounds
Bashaw
Jackie Northey – (780) 372-3648

Farm to Fork 2001
July 18 - 20
Melbourne Convention Centre
Melbourne, Australia
Kristine Manser – (03) 9642-8144

Wildrose Classic Young Canadian Simmentalers Show
July 19 - 22
Bashaw Agricultural Grounds
Bashaw
Jackie Northey – (780) 372-3648

XIV International Plant Nutrition Colloquium
July 28 - Aug 3
University of Hannover
Hannover, Germany
IPNC Secretariat
+49-(0)511-762-2626

August 2001

2001: A Field Day Odyssey
Aug 2
Alberta Agriculture Field Crop Development Centre, Field Laboratory
Lacombe
Kelly Levesque or Loree Verquin
(403) 782-8100 (Ext. 0 or 114)

Canadian Junior Maine Anjou Show
Aug 3 - 5
Bashaw Agricultural Grounds
Bashaw
Jackie Northey – (780) 372-3648

The Seventh Biennial Conference on Agroforestry in North America and The Annual Conference of the Plains and Prairie Forestry Association
Aug 12 - 15
Ramada Hotel and Conference Centre
Regina, Saskatchewan
John Kort – Conference/Program Chair
(306) 695-5130

Western Canadian Team Judging Competition
Aug 16 - 17
Bashaw Agricultural Grounds
Bashaw
Jackie Northey – (780) 372-3648

National Young Cattleman Program
Aug 16 - 18
Bashaw Agricultural Ground
Bashaw
Jackie Northey – (780) 372-3648

Western Canadian Junior All Breed Heifer Show
Aug 16 - 18
Bashaw Agricultural Grounds
Bashaw
Jackie Northey – (780) 372-3648

September 2001

Allen D. Leman Swine Conference
Sept 14 - 18
Hyatt Regency Hotel
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Sarah – 800-380-8636 or (612) 624-3434

Harvest of the Past
Sept 16
Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village
Edmonton
Shirley – (780) 662-3640

October 2001

Agriculture and Food Week
Oct 7 - 13
Ron Brown – Growing Alberta
(780) 955-3714
e-mail: info@growingalberta.com

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November 2001

7th Annual Canadian Farm Safety and Rural Health Conference
Nov 4 - 6
Fantasyland Hotel – West Edmonton Mall
Edmonton
Canadian Coalition for Agricultural Safety and Rural Health – (306) 966-8499 or
Solomon Kyeremanteng – (780) 427-4227

Saskatchewan Pork Expo
Nov 13 - 15
Saskatoon Inn
Saskatoon, SK
Wendy Hayes – (306) 933-5078

2001 National Beef Science Seminar – Emerging Issues and Opportunities
Nov 14 - 15
District Exhibition Park
Lethbridge
Jennifer Squires – (403) 317-2297

Canadian Western Agribition
Nov 18 - 25
Exhibition Park
Regina, Saskatchewan
Canadian Western Agribition – (306) 565-0565

December 2001

Site Specific Management
Dec 11 - 12
Mayfied Inn
Edmonton
Dave Burdek – (780) 674-8305

January 2002

Banff Pork Seminar
Jan 22 - 25, 2002
Banff Centre
Banff
Banf Pork Seminar – (780) 492-3236

POSTPONED TO 2002
International Farm Management Congress 2001
Date to be announced
Wageningen, The Netherlands
J. Wilson Loree – (403) 556-4213

Agri-News

June 11, 2001

Drought, water, forages and cattle

A team of specialists from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Prairie Farms Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) have worked together in producing a newsletter entitled ***Drought, Water, Forages and Cattle***. Alberta Agriculture and PFRA financially supported the publication.

"The newsletter targets drought stricken pastures and the water and forage shortages for cattle on these pastures," says Bob Buchanan, agriculture water specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Leduc. "It provides a list of options, information, resources and management strategies to assist producers with pasture drought conditions."

This year, unlike previous years, pasture drought conditions are province wide and the challenges producers are facing are huge. The newsletter is intended to assist producers with these challenges by providing information on drought, water supply and the special management decisions and practices that need to be employed when facing the conditions that are pervasive in Alberta this year.

"In agriculture, we too often define water management based on the weather at the time," adds Buchanan. "In wet years, it's our enemy and we do everything to drain it away. In dry years, it's our long-lost friend and we try and recover what we previously drained away. This year, we're learning, again, what the value of water and moisture really are and the need to develop long-term farm water, forage and cattle management plans that seriously address drought conditions."

Articles in the newsletter include: Drought proofing farm water supplies; Tips on selecting a pasture water system; PRFA rural water development program; Rangeland management during drought; Sort and sell cull cows early; and, Effect of drought on energy and protein content in forages.

A list of water, forage and beef specialists are listed on the back of the newsletter, should producers have additional questions they need answered. A list of internet resources is also included for further reference information.

Drought, Water, Forages and Cattle is a free publication, available at all Alberta Agriculture district and regional offices and at all PFRA offices in the province.

Contact: *Bob Buchanan*
(780) 986-8985

This Week

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Provincial experts address severe dry conditions

Experts from three government departments provided technical briefings Friday on the extent of severe dry conditions in Alberta. These briefings in Calgary and Edmonton laid out the extent of these conditions geographically across the province.

As the conditions carry over into this spring, Albertans are becoming more and more concerned about adequate water levels for irrigation, soil moisture conditions for farming, increased forest fire risk and the effects of low water conditions on fish and wildlife.

"While we have to keep in mind that nature can act suddenly to alleviate moisture concerns, we are working from a severe deficit situation," says Ray Keller, water supply specialist with Alberta Environment, Edmonton. "Two dry summers in a row coupled with near-record low mountain snowpack have left us at the mercy of nature to bring us rain this spring. So far, that rain hasn't come in the most needed areas."

Normally, the province will see between 50 and 100 mm of rain over the spring months. So far, it has received only trace amounts in most areas of the province.

"The lack of moisture is taking its toll on the province's agricultural industry," says Lloyd Andruchow, drought-monitoring specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Significant rains are needed by mid-June for forage and grain crops.

"Almost 90 per cent of the provincial agricultural area does not have enough soil moisture for annual cropping this year. Farm dugouts for watering livestock are at record low levels."

These conditions are threatening to impact what is a $7 billion primary agricultural industry in Alberta. Low water conditions in provincial lakes and streams could also put stress on fish and wildlife.

The continued drying trend will also result in a build up of high to extreme forest fire hazard conditions. These conditions will increase the potential for out-of-control wildfires.

Contact: *Lloyd Andruchow*
(780) 427-3338

Alberta government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000.

Visit the Government of Alberta web site <www.gov.ab.ca> to download a presentation on soil moisture conditions.

Answering questions on dry conditions

In an effort to keep Albertans informed about current dry conditions, some commonly asked questions and answers have been compiled.

Environment

- **How critical is the water supply shortage province-wide?** Much-below-normal precipitation has occurred in the majority of the province. As a result, water storage levels are low in many of the province's reservoirs. The lack of a substantial mountain snowpack this year raises some concerns about sustained river levels in parts of the province as the summer progresses.
- **What are the most deficient areas for water shortage?** In terms of supply, the southern part of the province is the worst. However, there are pockets of shortage in all parts of the province. There is concern in the south because many of Alberta's normally reliable reservoirs are at low levels due to lower-than-average precipitation over the past two years. In terms of soil moisture conditions, the driest areas are in central and north central Alberta, as well as large portions of the southeast.
- **How does Alberta Environment monitor these conditions?** Alberta Environment carries out snow surveys in the mountain and plains area of the province. Hydrometric (streamflow) and meteorologic stations do real-time monitoring. Alberta Environment provides daily natural flow calculations for water management. It posts information (operational data) to the department web site about reservoir and stream flow conditions updated each morning. Conditions are carefully monitored to optimize the use of the available water supplies within the conditions of licenses.
- **How has this lack of moisture affected our river levels?** In most cases, river levels were below average because of the dry conditions experienced during the summer and fall of 2000. Some mountain-fed rivers are near average because of recent snowmelt. However, the below-average snowpack means that there is some concern that levels will fall without substantial rainfall.

River Basin	% of Average
St. Mary River	64
Waterton River	73
Oldman River	49
Highwood River	43
Bow River at Calgary	73
Red Deer River at Red Deer	57
North Saskatchewan River at Edmonton	76

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- **What are current reservoir levels at?** Many of the reservoirs are hovering at less than 30 per cent of capacity. Levels are expected to remain well below average without some significant rainfall. However, these reservoirs are expected to increase with spring snowmelt over the next month.
- **What makes this year different from others in recent memory?** Two factors. First, the widespread extent of the dry conditions rather than in concentrated areas of the province. Currently, the dry conditions cover a majority of the province. The second factor is that the dry conditions have lasted for two years in some areas of the province.
- **How much rain is needed to make a big impact?** An upper cold low system bringing widespread rain for a period of a couple days would allow the moisture to soak into the ground and improve soil moisture conditions.
- **Will towns and cities have to ration their drinking water supplies?** Alberta Environment provides information about water levels to municipalities, and advice about conservation. However, the decision to introduce rationing programs is up to the municipalities themselves to decide.

Agriculture

- **How bad are conditions province-wide?** Alberta suffered one of the driest winters on record in 2000/2001. The provincial average precipitation total for the period of November 1 to March 31 was 42 per cent of the long-term normal. Almost 90 per cent of the provincial agricultural area does not have enough soil moisture for annual cropping this year. Below normal precipitation in late summer, fall and winter did not replenish moisture reserves, and high winds have contributed to drying out the soil. Livestock producers across most of the province are dealing with poor pasture growth and very low to dry dugout levels.
- **What are the worst hit areas of the province?** In terms of soil moisture conditions, the driest areas are in central and north central Alberta and large portions of the southeast. Winds have dried the seedbed in these areas, increasing the risk of poor germination and causing some farmers to delay seeding. Timely, above average rainfall will be required throughout the growing season over most of the province in order to produce crops with average yields.
- **Are there any areas of the province that are OK?** There are two areas of the province that have received timely snow and/or rain this season. The area along the mountains in the south from Banff to the Montana border and a triangle starting just north of Grande Prairie widening to Manning on the east and the B.C. border on the west have adequate spring soil moisture for crop germination. These areas are still concerned with dugout levels, however, as most dugouts are only half to three-quarters full.
- **When is it too late for rain to save the crops?** The period between now and June 15 is critical for forage and grain crops. Germination and delayed crop growth after the end of May increases the risk of severe frost damage in the fall. Every day without rain reduces crop productivity. Farmers may choose to silage crops at risk for frost damage in the fall. Adequate, timely rains are vital for crop success. The type of rain is important as well. Small amounts of rain with long hot, dry periods in between is as detrimental to crops as no rain at all. Small amounts of moisture followed by high temperatures encourage seed germination then if no further moisture, or only small amounts follow, the susceptible seedlings die off. A more favorable scenario is a good, low-intensity rain delivering three to six (or more) centimeters of precipitation over two to five days. This allows plants to germinate and maintain plant growth.
- **What crops require the most water?** Generally, forage crops (hay and pasture), potatoes and the cash crops grown in the south (sugar beets, fresh vegetable crops, corn etc.) require the most water.
- **What is the water pumping program?** The Alberta Agriculture Water Pumping Program is a service designed to assist producers by providing pumping equipment to help them obtain water for domestic and livestock use. Alberta producers who are experiencing water shortages for domestic and livestock use are eligible to use the equipment. For a nominal fee, a producer or group of producers can rent 6- or 8-inch aluminum pipe and pump(s) from Alberta Agriculture to fill dugouts or other suitable catch basins from nearby water sources. Equipment is delivered to the pumping site and technical assistance is provided for proper operation. Approximately 900 clients make use of the program each year. This year, rental rates for the equipment have been reduced by 50 per cent. Farmers can get information on other drought and risk management related topics by logging on to the following web sites:
  - Alberta Agriculture's drought management web site http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/sustain/agdisaster/index.html
  - Alberta Environment web site http://www.gov.ab.ca/env/
  - PFRA drought watch web site http://www.agr.ca/pfra/drought.htm

Sustainable Resource Development

- **What does the lack of moisture mean for the forest fire season?** A continuation of the drying trend will result in a build up of high to extreme fire hazard conditions. These conditions will increase the potential of out-of-control wildfires. As summer approaches, the predominant ignition source will shift from human-caused to lightning-caused with a dramatic effect on the number of fire starts.

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- **What do the dry conditions mean for fish?** Low water levels can affect fish in different ways. Spawning habitat may not be available because it is exposed along shores or migration routes are blocked. Temperatures can become higher than normal, which can lead to lower oxygen in the water and fish kills. Fish may be concentrated in fewer pockets and more vulnerable to fishing, etc.
- **How is wildlife impacted?** Waterfowl are affected significantly because wetlands dry up and nesting habitat becomes less secure. Even hoofed animals like deer and elk are affected with fewer water sources and poorer grazing or browsing habitat. There is the potential for greater contact between wildlife and landowners and a need for greater tolerance of wildlife that access water sources like dugouts.

Contact: Lloyd Andruchow
(780) 427-3338

Dairy industry restructuring progresses

The Dairy Industry Governance Team is making progress on its restructuring project. The project target is to shift control of the dairy industry governance away from government and into the hands of industry stakeholders. Initial meetings centered on developing a mission statement for the new organization, refining the characteristics of what the new organization needs to be, brainstorming various governance structures and deciding what role producers and processors need to play in decision making.

The team reviewed the Thurber Report to ensure that they are on track with what it suggested. This report clearly indicated that producers and processors support:

- a democratically elected governing body
- policies and direction set by industry stakeholders
- a market responsive system which is easy to understand and manage
- closer working relationships between producers and processors
- a policy-making structure that is transparent and accountable to the industry as a whole
- an appeal process that is separate from the policy-making process, and
- maintaining the present pricing system

The Dairy Industry Governance Team believes that in order for the dairy industry to continue to be successful in the future, it must strive for:

- a well managed, efficient system that is mindful of all stakeholders concerns from gate to plate
- ongoing stakeholder consultations to ensure that the industry is meeting the needs of the customer
- an industry that continues to grow and be profitable
- elimination of the duplication in the system reducing costs and increasing harmonization
- an industry which is environmentally responsible
- an industry that continues to meet consumer needs by producing quality products

The team proposes the following overall vision statement – ***A growing, profitable and consumer focused dairy industry***. The vision statement, a draft mission statement, characteristics of the new organization, the role and draft organizational structure will be discussed at an industry meeting on June 18th in Nisku.

"Producer delegates, processors and milk haulers are attending this meeting in Nisku," says Yvonne Grabowsky, dairy project leader with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "The governance team will present what they have done to date and ask for input and suggestions. A process to gather input and feedback from all stakeholders will take place in fall 2001."

Timelines for the project are:

- June/2001 – industry meeting
- June to August/2001 – drafting preparation of regulations
- September to December/2001 – stakeholder input into draft documents
- January to April/2002 – documents go to legislature for approval
- April to August/2002 – producer/processor plebiscite, transition and set up of new structure
- August 1/2002 – targeted switch date to the new organization

Please feel free to contact Grabowsky at (780) 361-1231, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000.

The Dairy Industry Governance Team includes:

- **Producers** – Bruce Beattie, Lorrie Jespersen, Aart Okkema, Rients Palsma, Bill Feenstra, Bill Van Rootselaar, Lenard Crozier
- **Processors** – Barry Northfield, David Etherington, Brian Miller, Anthony Oetelaar, Gary Reid, Yves Leroux, Bill McLeod
- **Project Leader** – Yvonne Grabowsky

Members of the Agricultural Products Marketing Council, Dairy Board, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Alberta Justice staff are also resources to this project.

Contact: Yvonne Grabowsky (780) 361-1231
Maureen Bolen
Facilitator/Communications Coordinator
(403) 934-3355

Scholarships make business management training more affordable for farmers

Scholarships are now available to help farmers, ranchers and agri-business operators obtain business management training.

These scholarships, available for farmers and ranchers enrolled in the Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture (CAPA), will help make this training more affordable for participants. It also enables the partners of CAPA, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Olds College, to maintain the high standard of guest presenters. All agricultural societies in Alberta will be eligible to grant a scholarship for the Competitive Advantage Program.

"CAPA is 10 days of intensive business management training," says Morley Kjargaard, a member of Alberta Agriculture's business and human resources development team, Olds. "Participants gain knowledge, tools, and insight to the process of managing a business. Topics such as capital budgeting, marketing, cash flow forecasting, human resource management, strategic planning, communication and negotiation are elements of CAPA and are essential skills of a successful business manager."

This is an exciting development for the province. Participants in CAPA benefit by obtaining the business skills and training necessary to operate viable and sustainable operations. Ag Societies and rural communities benefit because they rely on rural people, both to operate their organizations and to use their services and facilities.

The next offering of CAPA runs from November, 2001 through to January, 2002.

More information on scholarships for the Competitive Advantage Program for Agriculture can be obtained by contacting the local ag society or Kjargaard at (403) 556-4316. Information on CAPA can also be obtained by visiting the CAPA web site at <www.oldscollege.ab.ca/extension/capa/capa_home.asp>.

Contact: Morley Kjargaard
(403) 556-4316

Promoting your business at a Farmers' Market

Farmers' Markets, many people attend them for the atmosphere, surroundings, and mood. The experience is just as important as purchasing food for most shoppers at a Farmers' Market. So what can vendors do to create the proper atmosphere?

"According to ***A Guide to Starting, Operating and Selling in Farmers' Markets*** by the Cooperative Extension Service at Kansas State University, there is a lot vendors can do to promote their businesses at Farmers' Markets," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock.

The Guide suggests:

- **Connect with the customer** – if you don't like people maybe you should get another family member to work at the market. Direct Marketing is a growing industry because consumers want to know the people who produce the food they eat. You need to be friendly, take time to visit with the customers, greet them and thank them.
- **Keep displays neat and your image positive** – be creative! Logos and signs help people relate to who you are. At your displays there are many ways to pull in customers.
- **Try offering Point of Sale (POS) products or 'tag-on' sales suggestions** – hand out samples and use attention-getters. If you're not working the display make sure employees know about the product and have all the information they need. Encourage people to buy for canning, freezing and later use by supplying information on how to preserve product. Keep your displays full, the prices easy to see and your product fresh.
- **Get a sign** – signs needs to communicate your businesses identity. Does your business portray a high quality, lasting and competent impression or a sloppy, disorganized and fly by night one?
- **Get a logo** – each vendor at a Farmers' Market should have a sign or logo that clearly identifies the operation. Make it readable and simple so that it adds color and interest to the display. When there are three businesses selling beef, you want to make sure your customers come back to the right one next week, YOURS!
- **Build loyalty** – guarantee your products. No questions asked. Attempt to build a good reputation among customers so they will return and tell their friends about you.
- **Spread the word in your own communities** – how many people in your own area know about the local Farmers' Market? Spread the word about the benefits of having a Farmers' Market in the community. Send in letters to the editor or the local newspaper, get on the radio and TV. Talk to local leaders, municipal governments and community development organizations.

"Farmers' markets bring in additional customers into the business district, that's good for everyone," adds Engel. "Maybe it's time to look beyond the immediate rural community for possible customers for the local Farmers' market."

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Have the last word. All vendors should remember that customers are potential advertisers so remind them to come back or tell a friend. It never hurts to let the customer know that you are glad they shopped at the Market and that you hope to see them next week.

For more information of farm direct marketing call Engel at (780) 349-4465. Information is also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify>.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

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Agri-News Briefs

Saskatoon producer help needed

Researchers at the University of Saskatchewan are studying the costs and returns of saskatoon production on the prairies. They are seeking information about existing saskatoon operations of various sizes and types (irrigated/dryland, mechanical/hand-harvested). One of the products of this study will be a spreadsheet program that will be available to the public and will enable growers and prospective growers to evaluate the profitability of various production scenarios. Cooperation from a wide cross-section of saskatoon producers across the three prairie provinces is necessary for this project to succeed. Any Alberta saskatoon producers interested in cooperating with the research are invited to contact James Lokken at the Department of Agricultural Economics, U of S, (306) 966-4033, fax: (306) 966-8413 or e-mail: <lokkenj@duke.usask.ca>.

WCE delists oats futures contract

On May 31, 2001, the Board of Governors of Winnipeg Commodity Exchange (WCE) delisted the oats futures contract. This decision of the WCE Board was based on very limited trading activity for some time. Although the contract is technically sound, the majority of market participants continue to use a more liquid U.S. contract. WCE trades futures contracts in: canola, canola meal (June 2001), western barley, flaxseed, feed wheat and field peas; and options contracts in: canola, flaxseed, feed wheat and western barley. Established in 1887, WCE provides a marketplace for price discovery and the transference of price risk in an efficient and open manner. For further information, contact Daye Irving, Manager of Communications, WCE (204) 925-5004.

Changes to cattle tag program as of July 1

The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) reminds producers that the next phase of the CCIA program is being implemented on of July 1, 2001. As of July 1, all cattle currently in the system that are moving from their present location are required to be tagged with a CCIA-approved ear tag. All operators, including cow-calf, backgrounders and feedlots, are responsible for tagging untagged cattle before moving them from their current location. Also, as of July 1st, packers will begin recording the individual ID numbers from CCIA-approved tags and maintain them to the point of carcass inspection. Cattle arriving at auction markets untagged will be monitored and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) may send a notification to the owner of the cattle reminding them of their responsibility within the program. Monetary penalties for non-compliance begin on July 1, 2002. Canadian packing plants expect cattle to be tagged when arriving from feedlots and others that direct ship cattle to them. Cattle buyers should look for proper tagging of cattle when buying. When packing plants begin reading national ID numbers, there will be cattle in feedlots that were beyond the herd of origin at the Program start-up. These cattle must also be individually identified before they reach the packing plant. Interim one-piece tags are available to feedlots in order to accommodate the July 1, 2001 requirements. These interim tags are available through the CCIA. Canada has the highest standards in the world for raising healthy livestock and providing consumers with safe products. In the event of a Foreign Animal Disease outbreak such as Foot-and-Mouth, the Canadian Cattle Identification Program will help maintain access to export markets. There is no set price for tags. Tag price will depend on distributor and type of tag purchased. For further information contact Julie Stitt, CCIA general manager, (403) 275-2083 or Cindy McCreath, CCIA communications manager, (403) 275-8558.

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Agri-News

June 18, 2001

Drought disaster declared, farmer assistance announced

Extreme dry conditions and lack of significant precipitation prompted the province to declare a drought disaster and respond to the immediate need of livestock producers. The province will provide assistance of $4 per acre through the ***Native Forage*** component of the ***Farm Income Assistance Program 2001*** (FIAP 2001).

The province is suffering from a lack of moisture not seen for more than 130 years. Below normal precipitation in late summer, fall and winter did not replenish moisture reserves, and lack of spring rainfall and high winds have increased the problem. Livestock producers across most of the province are dealing with poor pasture growth and very low to dry dugout levels.

"This is a critical issue across the entire province and many producers are being forced to sell off their herds," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "It takes years to build up a herd. To be forced to sell off your cows because you can't feed them is absolutely devastating for farmers."

Since March 1, 2001, more than 80,000 cow/calf pairs have been sold off from farmers' herds. The severe drought is threatening to impact a $7.3 billion primary agricultural industry in Alberta, of which livestock accounts for 60 per cent. Alberta has 40 per cent of the Canadian beef cow herd and more than 65 per cent of Canada's beef cattle are finished in Alberta.

"We are providing this drought relief to allow farmers to use the money in a way they determine will best meet their immediate needs," McClellan adds.

The province's honey producers, also affected by the severe drought conditions, will receive $4 per operational hive in 2001 under the ***Honey*** component of FIAP 2001.

In total, $73 million is being made available under the FIAP 2001 program for the province's livestock and honey producers. In order to help Alberta farmers better prepare for drought in the future, an additional $20 million has been allocated to ***the Alberta Farm Water Program*** (AFWP) to help farmers develop long-term, on-farm water supplies.

"It's clear that we need to develop a long-term approach to drought management for farmers," says McClellan. "We will continue working with the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation

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This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Administration and Alberta Environment to help farmers improve their ability to secure long-term water supplies. The AFWP will be a significant component of that solution."

The AFWP will pay for one-third of development costs, to a maximum of $5000 per producer, for eligible water supply projects. Farmers must apply for this program. Projects completed between January 1, 2001 and March 31, 2002 are eligible under this program. The deadline for submitting applications for the AFWP is May 31, 2002. Approved applicants must submit a long-term water supply management plan to Alberta Agriculture. Application forms and details for the AFWP are available at Alberta Agriculture district offices or on the internet at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/farmwater>.

Application forms for the FIAP 2001- Native Forage and Honey components will be mailed directly to producers who applied for these programs last year. Those who did not claim previously can obtain forms at Alberta Agriculture district offices, or on-line at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>. Deadline for receiving these applications is October 31, 2001. Tame hay and tame pasture are not eligible under this program because these crops are eligible under the $10.29 per acre *Canada-Alberta Farm Income Assistance*.

More information on these programs is available by calling Alberta Connects toll-free at 310-4455.

For more information regarding the extent of the provincial drought situation, visit the Government of Alberta web site at <www.gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: *John Knapp – Program Services*
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-9167

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

Annual Western Suffolk sale

The 4th annual Western Suffolk Sire Reference Program (WSSRP) sale will be held at the Olds Cow Palace on June 30, 2001. This is the only sale in Canada where all animals must meet minimum standards for performance, conformation and health. It will once again feature Suffolk and Charollais rams, whose performance for growth, muscling and leanness traits have made them eligible for this restricted sale. The 2001 sale will also include registered Suffolk ewe lambs from members of the Western Suffolk Sire Reference Program

"The exact number of ewe lambs isn't known yet, as the performance data on this year's lambs are still being compiled and analyzed," say Dr. Cathy Gallivan, WSSRP geneticist, Olds College. "To be eligible for sale, rams and ewe lambs must meet several criteria: minimum Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) for growth rate, muscle depth and leanness, as well as passing an inspection for physical soundness and an individual veterinary exam in the sale barn."

Blood testing for Ovine Progressive Pneumonia and Brucella ovis is also required to gain entry into this elite breeding stock sale.

Sheep producers who plan to attend the sale can take in the free seminars, beginning at 9:00 a.m. with Dr. Lynn Tait of Wild West Veterinary Services, Red Deer, conducting an Ask-the-Vet Session for one hour. At 10:00 a.m. Tony Stolz of the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission outlines the new national Sheep ID program recently undertaken by the Canadian sheep industry. The free lamb barbecue begins at noon, followed by the sale at 1:00 p.m. sharp. The Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers will be on hand to purchase wool. The trade fair, featuring sheep software, handling systems, fencing and other sheep supplies, runs all day.

"This is the fourth year of the Western Suffolk Sire Reference Program sale, and it has grown in popularity since it began in 1998," adds Gallivan. "Sheep producers who purchase more than one ram can take advantage of a five per cent rebate of the purchase price on each ram they buy after the first one."

For more information on the Western Suffolk Sire Reference Program sale, contact Dr. Gallivan at (403) 224-3962 or e-mail <gallivan@sheepcanada.com>.

Contact: *Cathy Gallivan, PhD*
(403) 224-3962
fax: (403) 224-3339
e-mail: <gallivan@sheepcanada.com>

Native/bush fruit industry in Alberta

The final report, ***Native/Bush Fruit Industry in Alberta – Production Potential and Market Prospects***, is available. The report provides information on the size, value and growth potential of the fruit industry in Alberta. It includes information on saskatoons and other fruit, such as black currants, wild black cherries (chokecherries), sour cherries, sea buckthorn and others.

"The saskatoon industry reported 1,057 planted acres of which 542 acres are producing fruit," says Sharon Faye, horticulture resource officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Production levels for 1999 were at 670,000 pounds. This is expected to increase to approximately 1.3 million pounds by 2002 and to 2.2 million pounds by 2004."

The percentage of berries sold into various market outlets was determined for saskatoons, black currants and wild black cherries. Approximately 42 per cent of saskatoon berries produced in Alberta were going into direct market sales (U-pick, farm gate and farmers' markets). About 10 per cent of production went towards on-farm processing, 42 per cent to

Cont'd on page 3

off-farm processors and six percent to food service. By 2004, the proportion of saskatoon berries going to processing and food service is expected to increase and the percentage to direct sales is expected to decline. Black currants have approximately 50 per cent of production going into direct market sales, and 50 per cent to on-farm processing. Wild black cherry are 79 per cent direct market sales (mostly U-pick), 15 per cent to off-farm processors and six per cent on-farm processing.

Gross sales for fresh and frozen saskatoon berries were around $1.3 million in 1999. This is expected to increase to $2.6 million by 2002, and increase to $4.5 million, by 2004. There is a demand for increased value added products for all fruit types. Developing markets in this area would enhance the gross revenues of the fruit industry.

"Producers' viewpoints on a number of issues were collected for this report," adds Faye. "These issues included producers working together in the areas of value-adding, pooling product, marketing, and collecting fees through a check-off system. The response was positive, ranging from 75 to 80 per cent in favour of these activities, provided that certain conditions were met. The survey also addressed production and marketing challenges, information needs of growers and post-harvest handling."

The intent of this report is to assist orchard operators in their decisions, and processors, financial institutions, researchers and government in determining industry status and potential growth areas. It also pointed out issues that need to be addressed, to help the industry as it moves forward.

For more information, or a copy of the *Native/Bush Fruit Industry in Alberta*, please contact Faye at (780) 422-5326. A copy of the report can also be downloaded from Alberta Agriculture's web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/economics/crops/index.html>.

Contact: Sharon Faye
(780) 422-5326
e-mail: <sharon.faye@gov.ab.ca>

What to do after the garden grows

The garden was planted, the growing season was a success, the Farmers' Markets were full to bursting with vegetables, fruit and berries, but now what? What is the best way to harvest all that goodness? What's the best way to take that fresh produce and keep it for great eating later in the year?

"***Garden-fresh Produce: Picking, Preserving and Preparing***, a book just published by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development," says Dave Orey, communications specialist with Alberta Agriculture's information packaging centre, Edmonton. "The information in the 56-page book is adapted from 17 factsheets that were originally written to help Farmers' Market vendors, u-pick operators and greenhouse owners add value to the products they sell."

This book provides information on the best methods for picking, storing, cooking and preserving vegetables or berries.

The book is an easy-to-read reference that covers pickling safety for beets, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, corn and cucumbers; making jam and jelly with Alberta grown berries; and preserving peas, pumpkins, raspberries, rutabaga, saskatoons, snap beans, squash, strawberries and tomatoes.

"Whether you buy or grow your own fresh produce, this book will help you enjoy it to the fullest," adds Orey.

Garden-fresh Produce: Picking, Preserving and Preparing is only available from Alberta Agriculture's Publications Office in Edmonton. The book is priced at $4.00, plus $2.00 shipping and handling, plus GST ($6.42 total). To order a copy, call the Publications Office at (780) 427-0391, or toll free at 1-800-292-5697.

Contact: Dave Orey
(780) 422-5519

Do you have an idea for promoting farm safety?

A new contest, designed to get young Albertans thinking about and involved in farm safety, was recently launched. The contest is co-sponsored by Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP) and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, under the auspices of the Canadian Agriculture Safety Program (CASP).

"Young Albertans are being encouraged to take a farm safety message and build a farm safety web site using the theme ***A Safe Farm is a Great Place to Grow***," says Solomon Kyeremanteng, manager of Alberta Agriculture's farm safety program, Edmonton. "We are asking Alberta high school students to focus their creative talents to help prevent injuries and deaths. Using their creative skills and ideas, they are to develop a web site that communicates the importance of farm safety to teens."

An individual or group can submit the website design. Designs can be produced using a computer or, if an individual or group has no access to a computer, by writing and/or sketching the ideas out on paper. The designs can be submitted on floppy, zip or super disc, CD Rom or hard copy on paper. The only absolute criteria are that the website must promote farm safety to teenagers. There is no limit to the number of website designs that can be entered per person, team or school, but each website design must be entered separately – one design per entry form. All entries must postmarked no later than September 30, 2001.

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More information is available on-line at <http://www.wrap.ab.ca/farmsafety/index.html>. Alberta high school students can go on-line and send a message to the world on what farm safety means to them.

Prizes are:

- 1st – \$1,500 scholarship and a digital stills camera for their school
- 2nd – \$1,000 scholarship
- 3rd – \$500 scholarship

The prizes must be accepted as rewarded and all entries become the property of the sponsors and will be used for promotional purposes. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has announced the contest during Hockey Night In Canada.

"I'm very excited to be part of this contest," says Kyeremanteng. "It is innovative and in tune with modern high-tech communications. The messages from Alberta's high school students will be accessible world wide on the internet. I hope that many of Alberta's high school students will embrace this opportunity to promote farm safety to Albertans and the world, and stretch their creative abilities at the same time."

Employees or family members of the sponsoring members of this contest – WRAP, Alberta Agriculture and CBC Television – are not eligible to enter or win.

Entries must be submitted on or before September 30, 2001 to:

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers
14815 - 119 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5L 4W2

For more information, contact Rod Scarlett, executive director, WRAP at (780) 451-5912, or Kyeremanteng at (780) 427-4227.

Contact: Solomon Kyeremanteng (780) 427-4227
Rod Scarlett (780) 451-5912

AIA honours long-term members

In April 2001, 23 members of the Alberta Institute of Agrologists (AIA) were honoured for their long-time service to the profession of agrology and the agriculture industry. These members of the AIA Edmonton Branch received recognition, thanks and congratulations for 40 or more years of service to the agricultural industry in Alberta. Of the 23, five members had served for over 50 years! Collectively, these honoured members have dedicated over 1,000 years to the continued improvement of the agriculture industry.

The Honourable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, recognized the members for their dedicated service and sent each recipient a Letter of Appreciation for the difference they have made to the industry.

"The AIA is an organization of university trained professionals that protects the public interest by ensuring its members are qualified and competent to provide knowledge of and advice on agriculture, food and associated natural resources," says Julie Toma, research officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The Years of Service Award was established to officially recognize and offer a sincere thank you to members for long service."

The award was presented to all members with 40 or more years of service/membership (total or continuous) who are current members of the Edmonton Branch. These people are an inspiration to all other members. They demonstrate to younger members and students that being a professional agrologist is a long term/life commitment.

Award Recipients:

William Lobay, P.Ag.	Spedden, AB
John R. Bocock, P.Ag.	Carbondale, AB
Ron G. McCullough, P.Ag.	Beaumont, AB
Dr. C.F. Bentley, P.Ag.	Looma, AB
Peter D. McCalla, P.Ag.	Calgary, AB
Dr. J.P. Bowland, P.Ag.	Portage la Prairie, MB
T. Alf Petersen, P.Ag.	Drumheller, AB
James A. Carson, P.Ag.	Cardston, AB
Dr. Joseph Richter, P.Ag.	Yugoslavia
H.M. Douglas, P.Ag.	Fairfax, MB
Dr. James A. Robertson, P.Ag.	Minnedosa, MB
J.B. Gurba, P.Ag.	Waskatenau, AB
K.G. Taylor, P.Ag.	Halkirk, AB
Adolph Goettel, P.Ag.	Waskatenau, AB
Ralph M. Trimmer, P.Ag.	St. Albert, AB
C.W. Harke, P.Ag.	New Sarepta, AB
Murray G. Turnbull, P.Ag.	Wosley, SK
Dr. Murray Hawkins, P.Ag.	Fisherville, ON
Charles L. Usher, P.Ag.	Brampton, ON
George Hughes, P.Ag.	Vegreville, AB
Walter F. Thomson, P.Ag.	
James Hladky, P.Ag.	Sangudo, AB
Dr. Russell E. Wells, P.Ag.	Unity, SK
Dr. Bruce Jeffery, P.Ag.	Gunton, MB
J.W.R. Lewis, P.Ag.	Winterburn/Stony Plain, AB
Jacob Ens, P.Ag	
J. Sid Lore, P.Ag.	Bassano, AB
Donald H. Laverty, P.Ag.	Grew up in Oyen, Vermilion and High River, AB

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The AIA is an association of competent, self-regulated professionals recognized by the public and private industry as a primary source of specialized knowledge and leadership relating to agriculture, food and associated natural resources.

Agrology is the science of agriculture and environmental sustainability involving plants, animals and associated natural resources. Professional agrologists (P.Ag.'s) are individuals who are practicing agrology and are members of the AIA.

Contact: Julie Toma
(780) 427-3080

Agri-News Briefs

Horticulture congress

The Alberta Horticultural Congress will be held at the Mayfield Inn and Suites, Edmonton, on November 8 to 10, 2001. The theme of the congress is Growing for Tomorrow. The congress association includes representatives from the Landscape Alberta Nursery Trades Assoc., the Alberta Market Gardeners Assoc., the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Assoc., the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta and the Flower and Herb Producers. A program for the congress, outlining the agenda and speakers, will be distributed in August. The congress planners are interested in receiving suggestions for speakers from Albertans involved in horticulture. For further information or to be added to the mailing list, contact Shirley Alton at the Alberta Horticultural Congress office at (780) 415-2324. This number is toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 and then the number. Information will also be provided via e-mail, contact Alton at <salton1@telusplanet.net>.

CPIC conference and annual meeting

The 49th Crop Protection Institute of Canada's (CPIC) conference and annual meeting is being held at the Sheraton Fallsview, Niagara Falls, Ontario on September 16 to 19, 2001. The theme of the conference is Beyond Science: Society At Risk? In keeping with the theme, the conference features presentations on the following topics: What happens when society forms beliefs based on emotion rather than fact; How misinformation has the potential to create fear, stir up dissension and even shake public faith; and How science-based industries are working together to educate consumers, allay fears, correct internet misinformation and respond to 'junkscience' reports. An international panel of presenters is in place for this conference. For further information, contact the CPIC at 1-800-521-9724, (416) 622-9771 or e-mail <cpic@cropro.org>. Information on the conference is also available on-line at <www.cropro.org>.

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Agri-News

June 25, 2001

Celebrating 50 years of helping producers grow!

For 50 years the staff at the Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN) have been working with producers to improve their operations. To celebrate the 50th anniversary of the CDCN an Open House is being held on July 24, 2001.

"Over the years, the focus of activities at the Centre has changed but the primary objective has always been to provide Alberta producers with quality services and products," says Dr. Stan Blade, director of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's CDCN, Edmonton.

Visitors will have an opportunity to see displays depicting aspects of all the programs at the Centre that support horticulture and special crop producers across Alberta. "The staff throughout the afternoon will present general interest talks. Producers will also have the chance to discuss the latest results from research conducted at the Centre," adds Blade.

The open house runs from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. The Honorable Lois E. Hole, Lieutenant Governor, and the Honorable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, will be on hand to officially open the day's activities. Everyone is invited to attend this free afternoon at CDCN. The Centre is located at 17507 Fort Road in northeast Edmonton. No pre-registration is required.

For more information about the CDCN open house, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 422-1789.

Contact: Betty Vladicka
(780) 422-1789

CDCN a history of on-going change

The history of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN) reflects the changes that have happened to agriculture in Alberta. On April 1, 1951, the Provincial Tree Nursery as it was then known, was transferred from the Department of Lands

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

and Mines to the Department of Agriculture. Its primary purpose in the 1950s was to provide Alberta farmers with trees and shrubs for their shelterbelts. In 1951, the Nursery distributed 123,814 trees. Demand for shelterbelt plantings grew over the years until the Nursery was shipping approximately 2.5 million plants.

As time went on, the facilities at the Provincial Tree Nursery were used to grow tree seedlings for other purposes. A significant change occurred in 1956 when the policy of supplying provincial parks was inaugurated. In 1959, the Nursery began distributing trees for Arbor Day for the City of Edmonton. In the early 1960s, the Alberta Forest Service revived its reforestation efforts turning to the only major source of tree seedlings, the Provincial Tree Nursery.

Research became an increasing part of the Nursery's function to meet the growing demand for plants. In 1959, it pioneered the growing of tree seedlings in containers in the province. Research in the 1960s and '70s, focussed on improving tree production through improved germination and improved weed and insect control. The commercial tree nursery growers became interested in the research at the Provincial Tree Nursery, and staff began to work with this industry to improve their operations. Staff also began cooperating with educational institutions and the facilities were used for instructional purposes.

In 1981, the facility became the center for horticulture research and extension in northern Alberta. That year, programs in vegetable production, turf and amateur horticulture were transferred to the Nursery. To reflect the change in mandate for the facility, in 1982 it was renamed the Alberta Tree Nursery and Horticulture Centre (ATN&HC). Programs continued to expand with the addition of greenhouse and seed potato specialists and the development of a micropropagation facility.

During the 1990s, the Horticulture Centre expanded its services to explore new directions. The provincial apiculture program was relocated to ATN&HC. In 1995, Alberta Agriculture responded to growing market opportunities for special crops. To assist producers in their diversification efforts, staff was hired to provide extension and conduct research into new crops suitable for central and northern Alberta. New directions resulted in a new name. The facility was renamed the Crop Diversification Centre North.

"The Crop Diversification Centre North will continue to respond to the changing needs of agriculture," says Dr. Stan Blade, director of Alberta Agriculture's CDCN, Edmonton. "Everyone is invited to come to the Open House and learn more about what is currently happening at the Centre."

For more information about the CDCN open house, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 422-1789.

Contact: Betty Vladicka
(780) 422-1789

Earth to Table Product Showcase – looking for Prairie region food products

The Earth to Table Product Showcase is an event sponsored by the Prairie Region of Cuisine Canada, a nationwide network of food professionals. This year the event is being held on June 26, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Delta Bow Valley Garden Patio in Calgary.

"They are looking for people who would like the opportunity to showcase their regional food products," says Kerry Engel, Rural Development Specialist- Business, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock. "People that would be attending the event include chefs, cooks, apprentices, retailers, food authors and other food professionals."

Regional cuisine is good food with local tastes and global influences. Packaged and bundled appropriately, regional foods are carving out a significant market niche and demanding a premium price. They include everything from fresh, in-season fruits and vegetables, locally raised meat products to processed foods. Many Alberta producers are already selling regional foods into foodservice, everything from organic vegetables to young, specially-cut pork products.

"When considering regional cuisine, the unique products of an area are highlighted," says Engel. "The interest in regional cuisine comes from a renewed interest in social heritage. It features seasonal foods harvested or processed at their peak and served at their freshest to capture the best flavor possible. Regional foods are in demand in tourism and food service sectors."

Creating a regional identity takes more than just sun, soil and water to produce the finest regional foods. It requires history, culture and tradition. "Good food is tied to a place and helps define and differentiate a region. The goal is to create a partnership between agriculture and the hospitality/tourism sector. By supporting and buying locally produced food consumers ensure a healthy farm economy," explains Engel.

By participating in the ***Earth to Table Product Showcase*** Alberta producers and processors will meet potential new customers, strengthen bonds with existing customers and have the opportunity to show what's new from their business, quickly and inexpensively!

For more information on the showcase or Cuisine Canada contact, Mary Bailey at (780) 431-1802 or e-mail <marybee@home.com>.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4465

Farm plan eases environmental action

What do low-flow kitchen faucets have in common with off-site watering, covered manure storage, reduced tillage and fall-seeded crops? They are all examples of practical, cost-effective actions Alberta farmers can take to improve the way their businesses influence environmental sustainability.

"More importantly, environmentally sustainable practices show consumers what is being done to reduce the environmental impact of farming operations," says John Kolk, a poultry and beef producer from Iron Springs, AB.

Improving the environmental impact of Alberta farms is the basis of a new Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program that will be unveiled in the spring of 2002. Kolk, who chairs the EFP steering committee, says the industry-led and government supported initiative, with representatives from various private and public ag-industry organizations, aims to give farmers a voluntary, made-in-Alberta environmental checklist that can be applied to any Alberta farm, regardless of its size or specialty.

"Following a 'whole farm' approach, the checklist guides farmers through a step-by-step assessment of everything from soil conservation to fuel storage, pesticide management, manure hauling, water quality and energy efficiency," adds Joyce Van Donkersgoed, veterinarian, livestock industry consultant and a member of the EFP's inter-agency steering committee.

To help agricultural producers move from environmental assessment to action, the EFP will focus on helping producers understand and adopt a "beneficial management practices" approach to their business, explains Van Donkersgoed.

The program will likely be introduced to farmers via workshops led by producers who have received special training. Participants will then return home to assess their individual operations and develop a specific action plan to be implemented over several years.

For more information, or to offer input into the EFP process or arrange a presentation for an organization, contact Dr. Van Donkersgoed at (403) 782-5153, or Therese Tompkins, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development at (780) 427-3588.

Contact: Dr. Joyce Van Donkersgoed
(403) 782-5153
Therese Tompkins
(780) 427-3588

Timely spraying to reduce weed competition

There is nothing like a little rain to lift the spirits of anyone growing crops. Recent moisture, however, brings a few challenges too.

"The obvious effect of moisture is the germination of seeds that have been stranded in dry soil," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "It will thicken crop stands, but it will bring out the weeds, too. The challenge will be finding the right herbicide for the various stages of both crops and weeds that are present."

When using herbicides, it is generally best to err on the side of being early. There is always the risk of injuring newly emerging seedlings, but the effect is probably less than the losses that are caused from weed competition. Crops with less than ideal plant populations will normally compensate – cereals by forming more tillers and canola by growing more branches and flower buds. The best weed control is achieved through crop competition, but you have to give the crop a chance to get ahead of the weeds.

"Crop scouting becomes more complicated under these circumstances," adds Hockridge. "You have to know the number of plants per square foot and the stage of growth they are at. You also have to know what weeds there are, what stage they are at and how dense they are. Since fields are so variable right now, the best way to get a good picture is to do a systematic check. Take a pencil and paper and record all of the pertinent data from several square meter sites across the field. You will be interested in both averages and variability in the field."

A further complicating factor is the amount of stress plants are under. As of June 15, there were decent moisture conditions throughout most of the province, and it appeared that there would be some heat. If weather and moisture conditions remain favorable, most herbicides will be quite active and less will be needed. Conditions can change quickly though, so judgements have to be made based on crop stage, weed stage and environmental conditions at the time of spraying.

"Last year at this time, we were feeling the effects of a late frost," says Hockridge. "While it is hoped that late frost does not recur this year, if it does, remember to delay spraying for about three days."

Every year, nature delivers a few surprises. The way the weather has been unfolding this year makes spraying decisions a lot more complicated.

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

Crop variety performance for your soil zone

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agri-Facts series of factsheets for crop variety performance have been updated for 2001. The nine factsheets show comparative data on the main provincial crop varieties, based on reported or measured yield of insured fields planted with common or certified seed.

The factsheets also provide information on Alberta Management Insights (AMI). AMI is a province-wide 'test plot' using actual production results from over 15,000 farms in Alberta that participate in crop insurance. The information is re-packaged in an easy-to-use format to help farmers make better cropping decisions.

Agdex numbers of these factsheets are:

- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Thin Black Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-2
- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Black/Dark Gray (East) Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-3
- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Black/Dark Gray (West) Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-4
- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Brown Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-5
- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Dark Brown Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-6
- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Dark Gray Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-7
- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Gray Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-8
- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Peace River Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-9
- Crop Variety Performance Comparisons: Black Soil Zone – Agdex 100/32-10

Copies of these free factsheets are available at all Alberta Agriculture district and regional offices or from the Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

These factsheets are also available on and can be downloaded from the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/100_ind.html>.

4-H'ers to attend Youth Leadership Camp

They'll run, read, climb and create in a week of extensive training, but when it's all over, four Alberta 4-H members will be better prepared to tackle any leadership challenges that may await them in the years ahead.

Alberta 4-H members Allison Kindt of Nanton, Alissa Nadeau of Fort Macleod, Maria Philipsen of Patricia, and Shallen Soetaert of St. Albert, will attend the Summer Youth Leadership Camp in Hinton from July 2 to 7, 2001. Combining a variety of physical activities with classroom training, the program aims to develop leadership, communication and group cooperation skills in young people. By examining areas such as cross-cultural communication, public speaking, group dynamics and conflict resolution, participants learn how they can participate in group settings more effectively.

Like many participants, Soetaert feels this program will benefit her in the years ahead. "I'm really excited about it because I like meeting people from different places and learning from them and being able to deal with different situations," said Soetaert, who plans to begin a combined degree in science and education at the University of Alberta this fall. "I'm hoping to improve my interpersonal skills, because I'm going into university and there will be a lot of new people there."

These four delegates were chosen to take part in the Youth Leadership Camp after attending the Selections program, held April 27-30, 2001 at Olds College. Selections is an annual 4-H program that brings together some of the province's top 4-H members to discuss issues of concern to youth. During the program, about 60 delegates are chosen to represent Alberta 4-H in a variety of events across North America over the coming year. The Selections trips, that include exchanges to eastern Canada, Montana, and Washington DC, among other educational excursions, begin in July and conclude early the following year.

For more information or to join 4-H, please call (780) 422-4H4H (toll-free through the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Betty Grudnizki*
(780) 427-4499

Agri-News Briefs

Cereal & Oilseed Helpline

The Cereal & Oilseed Helpline is a six-month pilot project in operation from May to November, 2001. The Helpline has been setup to handle cereal and oilseed production calls for the 2001 growing season. It operates from 8:15 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday. For cereal and oilseed calls, contact the local Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development crop specialist or the Cereal & Oilseed Helpline, toll free at 1-866-88CROPS (1-866-882-7677). For more information, contact Leonna Lind (403) 742-7558.

Two new factsheets

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has produced two new Agri-Facts factsheets that give basic information on Foot and Mouth Disease and Chronic Wasting Disease. These factsheets cover: a description of what these diseases are; their symptoms; how they are transmitted; whether they are a risk to human health; occurrences in Alberta; provincial surveillance measures and action in the event of an outbreak. ***Foot and Mouth Disease*** (Agdex 663-42) and ***Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) of Elk and Dear*** (Agdex #663-43) are free factsheets. Both are available at all Alberta Agriculture district and regional offices and from the Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB, T6H 5T6. These factsheets are also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/600_ind.html>.

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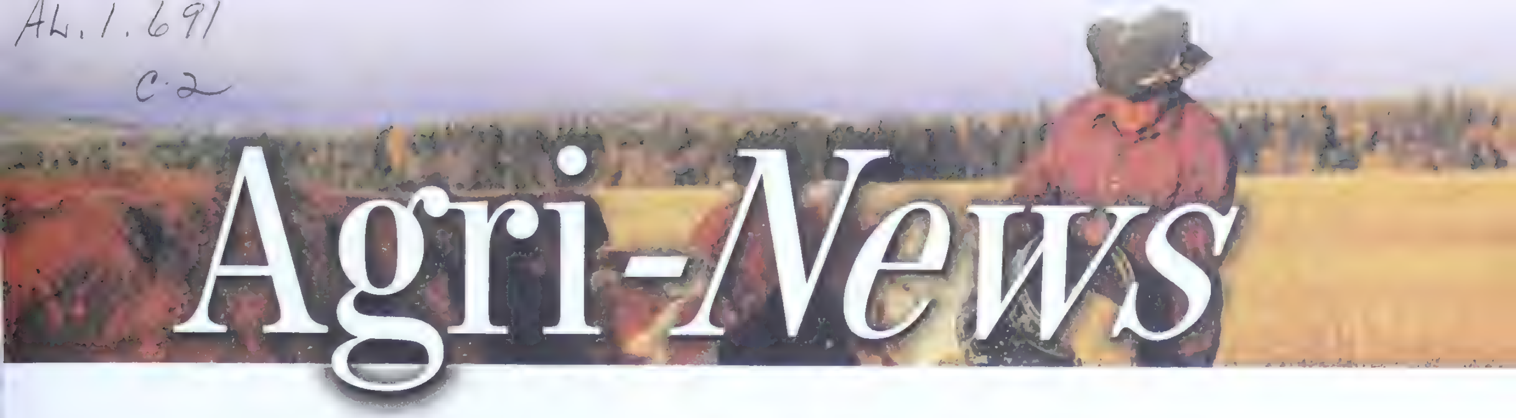

Agri-News

July 2, 2001

Livestock care guidelines integral to food quality assurance

Livestock care guidelines combined with compliance measures are an effective part of programs developed to ensure food safety and quality. This statement was made by Dr. Thomas Blaha, animal science professor at the University of Minnesota, at the ***Livestock Care Conference***, held June 7, 2001 in Calgary. The conference was sponsored by Alberta Farm Animal Care Association (AFAC), Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and University of Calgary.

Quality assurance programs in meat production are being created to respond to public concerns about agriculture production. Food safety has become a major issue and there is no doubt animal welfare will follow.

Food safety, environmental and animal care standards are the centre of the Minnesota Certified Pork program, partially developed by Blaha. "Food animal well-being can and should be an integral part of any quality management system, and that is what we have tried to do with the Minnesota Certified Pork program," he says.

This program, with its Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point - style (HACCP) measures, consists of only a handful of producers. The model is working and an enthusiastic buyer has been found for the pork. High standards have been adopted for the medical treatment, handling and general care of the animals. "The program is also market driven, making the program responsive to specific requirements of different buyers," adds Blaha.

To ensure the highest standards in the quality assurance program are maintained, farms are audited monthly by University of Minnesota auditors.

"Knowledge is good, but compliance is what is needed, and this program ensures compliance," says Blaha. "The idea is to create the highest credible model for agriculture production and I think we have shown it's possible. I would like to see this model adopted for the entire Minnesota agriculture industry."

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"The Alberta elk industry has found that it is possible to establish clear guidelines and maintain them when industry stakeholders collaborate," says Dr. Duane Landals, a member of the AFAC board and the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA). "The decade-long development of the Velvet Antler Removal Certificate Course wasn't always an easy process, but the end result is a program that meets the needs of the industry while factoring in animal welfare. It's a balance between economics and animal care."

In the beginning, that balance seemed to be a challenge. Under Alberta law, only veterinarians can perform surgery, and the AVMA took the position that antler removal was a surgical procedure. Producers were concerned that the cost of hiring a veterinarian to perform the removal would be too high, especially considering the logistical and timing concerns. Antlers are harvested in June, with individual animals selected only when their velvet antlers are at their prime.

A compromise was reached. Producers are required to complete a course on proper antler removal. Producers must sign the code of practice each year, signifying agreement to those practices. "This allows for the practices to be updated as new knowledge and technology is found," adds Landals.

As well, a veterinarian does not have to be present for the removal of the antlers, but each operation must have a designated veterinarian who is knowledgeable about the operation and its animals. "Both groups recognized the importance of this and both sides are satisfied with the results," says Landals. "At the end of the day, these types of programs produce wholesome, safe and animal-friendly food products."

AFAC is an industry-supported initiative dedicated to ensuring the province is a leader in farm animal care.

Contact: *Susan Church, Manager*
AFAC
(403) 932-8050

Dale Engstrom
Head of Beef, Dairy and Sheep
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-4516

Alberta and Montana enhance agriculture trade opportunities

Agriculture leaders from Alberta and Montana met on June 4 and 5, 2001 in Canmore to address opportunities and solutions to long standing trade issues such as pesticide access and registration, harmonization of trucking regulations, animal health, country of origin labeling and grain marketing.

The 2001 Montana Alberta Agriculture Opportunities Conference was opened by Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. Ralph Peck, Director of the Montana Department of Agriculture also attended, along with 90 key agricultural leaders and political decision-makers from both sides of the border. The conference was a follow up to the momentum started at the first Montana Alberta Agriculture Opportunities Conference in 1999.

"By inviting industry representatives from Montana and Alberta together to explore opportunities in agriculture, we are once again asking them to tell us what must be done to build a healthy industry. We want to form partnerships that will benefit and help each other as we look toward opening new markets and ensuring a healthy and sustainable agriculture industry," says McClellan.

"In 1999, at the first Montana Alberta Conference, we sought opportunities to improve the bottom line for our producers on both sides of the border. I am encouraged and optimistic that we will see the energy continue," adds Peck.

Participants were asked to develop a list of opportunities that Montana and Alberta can take advantage of, and meetings are now being organized over the next few weeks to address the initiatives that were raised. In some cases where government will take the lead, recommendations will be considered through the business planning process. In other cases, industry will follow through on actions.

Recommendations ensuing from conference include:

Animal health issues – requirements to enhance cattle feeder trade

- Finalizing the federal document outlining the requirements that need to be fulfilled to expedite the restrictive cattle feeder program.
- Identification of steps to demonstrate equivalency of animal health standards.
- To expedite the completion of a risk assessment to determine the merits of a terminal feed lot approach. The risk assessment would outline the requirements covering the movement of Montana feeder cattle from Alberta feedlots to Alberta slaughter facilities.

Cont'd on page 3

- Once requirements are in place, establish a working group of Alberta/Montana veterinarians and industry representatives, to design an implementation process (monitoring and surveillance activities) that support the establishment of animal health equivalency and facilitate trade.
- Encourage stakeholders to accept that good science and research takes time for proper analysis.
- Take actions to minimize the risk of the spread of other animal diseases (bison and cervids) to domestic herds.
- Take a collaborative approach to foreign animal disease control by establishing:
  - tracking systems
  - a notification/communication plan
  - voluntary cease movement practices

Country of origin labeling issues

- Examine the establishment of a North American label for beef that would be available for use by both U.S. and Canadian retailers.
- Disseminate market information to the northern tier state producers and consumers concerning the costs of country of origin labeling.

Pesticide Harmonization Issues

- That specific commodity grower groups participate in an on going initiative to develop priorities for harmonization i.e. approvals, use, labeling and availability.
- Smaller commodity groups form an alliance to expedite minor use pesticide registration.
- Increase the resources and support the efforts of the NAFTA technical working group on pesticides.

Grain Marketing and Transportation

- That the Premier and Governor should establish a joint government task force on harmonizing trucking regulations in order to facilitate cross border trade.

Other

- Provide an annual report card on the successes, accomplishments and recommendations from the 2001 Montana/Alberta Agriculture Opportunities Conference.

Contact: Lisa Baer
Bilateral relations/strategic initiatives
Alberta Agriculture
*(780) 427-4148 **

Mike Sullivan
Information specialist
Montana Department of Agriculture
(406) 444-3684

* Alberta Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000.

Biotechnology may bring animal care benefits and challenges

Bio-engineered livestock may bring many human health and environmental benefits, but the effect of bio-engineering on animal care is hard to predict, delegates at the recent Livestock Care Conference were told. The conference, sponsored by Alberta Farm Animal Care Association (AFAC), Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and University of Calgary, examined current livestock care issues.

"Animal and human genome research and the transfer of genes into cells holds great hope for human health," says Dr. Gil Schultz, University of Calgary, Faculty of Medicine, assistant dean of research. "The possibilities are only limited by our imagination. But the impact of those possibilities on animal care depends on how new technologies and knowledge are used."

For instance, in the 1980s an experiment that boosted growth hormone levels in mice generated very large mice. When the experiment was conducted on pigs, the result was animals that developed severe arthritis.

Yet, advances in biotechnology could bring about new methods of immunization and other advances to livestock management practice and care. "We are starting to get sophisticated enough to manipulate genes in specific tissues and at the right time. But if you do the wrong things at the wrong time, the consequences can be severe," says Schultz.

To ensure animals reap benefits and do not suffer from bioengineering, the Expert Panel on Husbandry of Animals Derived from Bio-engineering developed guidelines and an assessment tool for industry and government. The panel, sponsored by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Health Canada, finished its work in 2000.

"We wanted to determine how to address bio-engineered animal welfare, especially how it related to pain and distress," says Dr. Dan Weary, a University of British Columbia animal welfare professor and member of the Expert Panel. The committee decided that a 'precautionary approach' should be taken where the neutral effect on animals must be proven first and not assumed.

Animal movement, performance, health, reproductive capacity were some of the criteria identified by the panel to assess how bio-engineering affects animals. As well, if strategies to reduce negative effects on any of those areas were unlikely to be adopted by producers, then the animals shouldn't be allowed into commercial production.

Cont'd on page 4

"Research is critical to assessing the effect of bio-engineering on livestock animals, as it is with all livestock care issues and practices," says Weary. "As animal welfare researchers, we are interested in the effect of restraint, immediate pain from a procedure and post-operative pain."

"Ultimately, the effect of the manipulated gene on the animal's physical and psychological well-being is what should be considered," says John Church, provincial animal welfare specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "We need to assess this on a case-by-case basis. The assumption that bioengineering in animals means poorer welfare is not necessarily true."

AFAC is an industry-supported initiative dedicated to ensuring Alberta is a leader in farm animal care.

Contact: John Church
(403) 340-5335

Susan Church, manager
AFAC
(403) 932-8050

4-H Beef Heifer Show reaches a milestone

With approximately 200 Alberta 4-H'ers converging on Bashaw from July 15 to 17, 2001 for the 25th Annual Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show, the event promises to be memorable.

Ever since the event was first held in 1977, the Beef Heifer Show has challenged delegates to improve their knowledge of beef animal care and husbandry and demonstrate their skills at raising and showing beef breeding stock. It has also given participants opportunities to meet beef industry professionals, inspiring greater interest in the beef industry among rural youth.

"4-H'ers can meet people, experience more intense show situations and promote their animals at the Beef Heifer Show," explains Allison King, 4-H project event coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and a former Beef Heifer Show participant. "They also continue to gain interest in the industry through the show. For my first project, I had one heifer, now I have my own entire herd."

Participants at the show are divided by age into three categories: 9 to 11-year-olds; 12 to 15-year-olds; and, 16 to 21-year-olds. Delegates show their beef animals and take part in judging and knowledge testing competitions. To mark the Show's 25th anniversary, there will be a number of displays highlighting the beef industry. "We're going to have a global beef display that gives an overview of Canada's role in beef production in relation to the rest of the world, as well as displays from sponsors," says King. "This year will also feature the William James Hypnosis on Tour show as part of the event's entertainment."

Fifty-eight 4-H Clubs from Alberta will take part in this year's show. Compared to the 30 clubs that attended the first running of this event, it's clear that the 4-H Beef Heifer Show has grown over the years and all indicators are for continued success in the years to come.

The event is sponsored by Alberta Treasury Branches, the Bashaw Agricultural Society, Alberta 4-H Programs Trust, Gas Alberta Inc., Ivomec, ABS Canada, UFA, Alberta Motor Association and the Alberta Cattle Commission.

"Thanks to the support of the sponsors, the energy of the volunteers and the enthusiasm of the participants, it looks like the 25th annual Provincial Beef Heifer Show will go over well, and that its success will continue to grow," adds King.

For more information on the Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show, or to join 4-H, call 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta through the RITE line at 310-0000), or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Allison King
(780) 422-1834

Learn about the honey industry at the CDCN open house

Alberta is the honey capital of Canada! "Beekeepers in the province produce about one third of Canada's total honey crop. Alberta's beekeepers consistently produce over 20 million pounds of high quality, mild-flavored honey that is exported to Europe, the Far East, USA and other parts of Canada," says Kenn Tuckey, provincial apiculturist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton.

The apiculture program is one of several operating at the Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN) that is hosting an open house on July 24, 2001 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The open house is part of the Centre's anniversary celebrations commemorating 50 years of service to Alberta producers. On April 1, 1951, the Centre was transferred to the Department of Agriculture from the Alberta Forest Service. Back then it was known as the Oliver Tree Nursery and provided trees and shrubs for farm shelterbelts.

The Honorable Lois E. Hole, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, and the Honorable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, will be on hand to officially open the day's activities at 1:15 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend this free afternoon at CDC North located at 17507 Fort Road in the northeast area of Edmonton. No pre-registration is required.

Open house visitors will have an opportunity to see displays depicting aspects of all the programs at CDCN that support horticulture and special crop producers across Alberta.

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Throughout the afternoon, staff will present general interest talks. Producers will also have the chance to discuss the latest results from research conducted at the Centre.

"Visitors will have the opportunity for a close-up look at the workings within a beehive with the bees safely on the other side of a pane of glass," says Tuckey. "The observation hive is part of the display that the apiculture program will have on hand during the open house."

Tuckey and his staff work with the 750 beekeepers throughout the province. The annual honey crop generates over $20 million of farm cash receipts, as well as the added value from the processing done by provincial honey packers. By providing bees for pollination, Alberta beekeepers also play a major role in the success of the hybrid canola seed industry in southern Alberta. This aspect of beekeeping generates an additional $5 M of income.

For more information about the CDCN open house, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 422-1789. For more information about beekeeping and the Alberta honey industry, contact Tuckey at (780) 415-2314.

Contact:	*Betty Vladicka*	*Kenn Tuckey*
	(780) 422-1789	*(780) 415-2314*

Alberta 4-H'ers Montana bound

Forget Vancouver, New York, London and Rome. Anita Lessner wants to see Bozeman, Montana.

Lessner, along with Lanny Anderson of Hughenden, Kyle Cowan of Compeer and Kim Hobbs of Czar, will be in Bozeman from July 9 to 12 for the Montana 4-H Congress. There they'll have a chance to attend workshops, tour the city and meet 4-H members from the Big Sky state. These four Alberta youths were chosen as Alberta's delegates to the Montana Congress while they were taking part in the Alberta 4-H Selections program in April.

"This was the trip I've wanted to take forever. Some of my friends have been on it and they said it was awesome," explained Lessner, an 18-year-old 4-H'er from Marwayne. "This is a chance to see how 4-H is run in the US and to meet people from the south."

It is also an opportunity for the Alberta delegates to expand their knowledge in fields such as public speaking and livestock judging. Lessner is particularly keen on this latter area, as she has recently joined the 3 Rivers 4-H Judging club and has been attending numerous judging events and competitions throughout the past year. Anderson will be attending public speaking workshops and seminars while at the Montana Congress. For all the delegates, the tour is also a chance to explore historical sites and have some fun. Past 4-H trips to Montana included stops at museums and white water rafting tours.

Sponsored by Alberta 4-H Programs Trust, the Montana trip is one of about a dozen awarded annually at the Selections program to Alberta's top 4-H members. Through Selections, close to 60 Alberta 4-H members are chosen each year to travel to a number of different destinations across Canada and the United States. These trips, ranging from inter-provincial exchanges to 4-H congresses in Montana and California, give participants the chance to experience the diversity of both countries and to see how 4-H programs operate in different areas.

For more information, or to join 4-H, call (toll free through the RITE line at 310-0000) 422-4H4H, or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Betty Grudnizki*
(780) 427-4499

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New Bison video

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has produced a new video on handling bison. ***Handling Bison: Safely and Effectively*** addresses the challenge bison ranchers face in rounding-up and restraining their animals. "This challenge can be met safely and effectively by understanding bison behaviour and using good handling techniques," says Alberta Agriculture information officer Ken Blackley. "Proper bison handling reduces stress and results in improved overall animal health, better carcass quality and fewer injuries to both animal and handler." Handling techniques are the main focus of the video. "The new video clearly shows strategies and techniques that will help producers handle bison more effectively. The tape can be used to learn basic bison psychology and how to apply it to both facility design and animal handling. The video contains a lot of good solid information that can help producers get the job done safely and effectively," adds Blackley. The video is available for sale from the Publications Office at 7000-113 street, Edmonton, AB, T6H 5T6, at a cost of $25 each plus $2 shipping and handling, plus GST ($28.89). To purchase, call 1-800-292-5697 (Canada only) or (780) 427-0391. For more information, contact Blackley at (780) 422-3951, fax (780) 427-2861 or e-mail <ken.blackley@gov.ab.ca >.

Crop protection conference

The Crop Protection Institute of Canada (CPIC) is holding their 49th conference and annual meeting in Niagara Falls, ON, on September 16 to 19, 2001. The theme of the conference is Beyond Science: Society at Risk? The conference will be an opportunity to learn about what happens when society forms beliefs based on emotion rather than fact; how misinformation has the potential to create fear; and how science-based industries are working together to educate consumers. New at this year's conference is a Resource Centre where the latest products and services for Canada's crop protection industry will be displayed. For further information about the conference, call toll free 1-800-521-9724, or visit the CPIC web site at <www.cropro.org>.

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Agri-News

July 9, 2001

Diamondback moth in canola

Diamondback moth is an occasional pest in canola in Alberta and does not overwinter on the prairies. In early May or June, adult moths riding on the winds arrive from the southern United States. The moths arrived in Alberta early this year, and because of this insect, there have been reports of significant damage to canola right across the province into the Peace River country.

"The larval stage of the diamondback moth is the damaging stage," says Jim Calpas provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Small green larvae hatch from eggs laid on the canola leaves. The larvae feed on leaf tissue and reach a length of 12 mm before pupating. When disturbed, the larvae will thrash around and 'bungee jump' from the leaf several centimeters suspended from a single silken thread. The larvae pupate in delicate lace-like cocoons and adults emerge from the cocoons in 7 to 14 days to repeat the cycle."

Healthy canola plants with adequate moisture and good growing conditions can compensate quite well to the feeding damage from diamondback larvae. Spraying young canola when there is less than 25 per cent defoliation is not warranted. As the canola begins to bud and flower, the decision to spray depends on the numbers and stages of diamondback moth present. If there are one to two larvae present in early flowering, or two to three larvae present in the pod stage, then a spray may be justified, assuming the larvae are feeding on the flowers and pods. If the larvae are feeding on the leaves during flowering and pod, chemical control may not be necessary.

"There have been a few reports of 50 per cent defoliation of canola fields due to diamondback moth larvae, and chemical control has been applied," continues Calpas. "The damage is sporadic with many reports of only 5 to 10 per cent defoliation. Reports also indicate that most of the larvae are almost ready to pupate, or have already pupated. This means that the majority of the damage from this generation has already been done. Spraying will not kill the pupae. It will be another three or four weeks before much of the next generation will start to hatch, and by this time the plants will have flowered and begun to fill the pods. A spray may not be required during flowering unless larvae are found feeding on the flowers. If the

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

next generation of diamondbacks emerge during the pod stage, a spray may be necessary if larvae are feeding on the pods."

The recent rain in many areas will delay the development of the insect and will kill some of the young larvae that are present. With good growing conditions, the plants can recover quickly and will compensate for the previous feeding damage to the leaves and some of the buds. Be aware that just because there was a large first generation, it does not necessarily mean that the second generation will also be in large numbers.

Always remember to **alert local beekeepers** if a spray is required during flowering. Spraying in the evening when bees are out of the crop will help reduce the risk to bees and other natural pollinators.

Contact: Jim Calpas
(780) 422-4911

Farming acres, not fields

Precision farming, or site specific management (SSM) is the practice of tailoring farm inputs according to differences in growing conditions within farm fields. It offers the potential to increase the economic efficiency and the environmental friendliness of farm input use.

"Single rates of fertilizer are often over applied in certain areas of farm fields, such as eroded knolls," says Sheilah Nolan, research agrologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "However, fertilizer may be applied at lower than regular rates in areas that don't yield well even under the best conditions. Another area where fertilizer may be reduced, is at the bottom of slopes where soils are already high in fertility. In these low areas, reduced fertilizer can mean reduced lodging as well as reduced chances for fertilizer loss to the environment by leaching or as a greenhouse gas. The technology developed to support SSM even has the potential to increase the efficiency of using a single rate, such as GPS-guided spraying to reduce overlaps of herbicide. SSM offers many possibilities for both economic and environmental benefits."

There's no one formula for successful SSM. Farmers must determine appropriate rates to suit their individual soil, climate and past management conditions. There is an impressive array of tools to help with this task. These include Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), variable rate controllers, software products and much more. However, fine-tuning management for SSM doesn't have to rely on technology. Many low-tech, low-cost approaches to SSM have been successful.

To learn which tools and what strategies have been successful and where, Alberta Agriculture has been working with agri-business, farmers and municipalities to put together a one and a half day conference and tradeshow called ***Site Specific Management …Keys to the Future***. It is being held December 11 and 12, 2001, at the Mayfield Inn in Edmonton.

"Provincial, national and international speakers will cover a wide range of SSM-related topics – from information management to on-farm examples of what's worked and what hasn't," adds Nolan. "The latest results of SSM research in Alberta and Saskatchewan will be featured. Sessions of particular interest to agri-businesses, producers and municipal representatives will be offered and continuing education units for the Certified Crop Advisor program will be available."

The tradeshow will exhibit recent developments in SSM, GPS, GIS technologies and software. An interactive session with large equipment, a mobile GIS lab, and a poster session with additional information on Alberta research results will be included in the tradeshow.

Conference participants are sure to pick up some useful ideas to fine-tune their current management strategies for economic and environmental benefit. For further information, call (780) 422-4385 or visit the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/conference/ssm>.

Contact: Sheilah Nolan
(780) 427-3719

E-commerce and the agri-preneur

If you own an agri-business or are planning to start a new agri-business, you may be wondering about e-commerce. "E-commerce can offer a new channel to sell agricultural products or services," says Lisa Houle, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer.

A new Alberta Agriculture AG-Strategies factsheet, ***Adding E-commerce to your Agri-business*** (Agdex #845-8) has been released to help Albertans with their investigation of e-commerce. Some common questions agri-preneurs ask include:

- How could I add e-commerce to my Farmers' Market business?
- I am planning to start a specialty sausage business. Should I set my new business up to sell my sausages over the internet?
- I wonder if I should use the internet to buy supplies and services for my greenhouse/garden shop?
- My competitors offer web-based sales or information. Should I?

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If you have questions similar to these, it may be worth investigating e-commerce. There are many factors to consider before making a fundamental business decision.

What are the advantages of e-commerce?

- Brochures and on-line catalogues are convenient methods for customers to discover new products and services, and are a more cost effective manner of keeping business information accurate and current.
- Consumers are able to do quick and more complete price comparisons between similar products and services. New internet services are offering automated price shopping and comparisons.
- Internet stores are accessible 24-hours a day for your shopping convenience.
- E-commerce makes it easier to continually assess competitive advantage.
- Some products and services are better suited to e-commerce. These include travel, cameras, toys, music, calculators, puzzles, bicycle parts and hobby supplies. Products that fit best are those that require a large selection, yet do not require personal selection by the buyer.

What are the disadvantages of e-commerce?

- Nobody really knows how many consumers and businesses will switch over to e-commerce and continue to use it.
- Some products and services are less suited to e-commerce. These include shoes, fashion accessories and some home design items. Anything requiring individual selection or fitting is questionable.
- The rules of how to successfully do e-commerce retailing are still being written. This makes it more difficult to know how to set-up an agri-business.
- The cost to set-up and maintain a web site can be significant, particularly if you need to outsource a lot of the technical skills to professionals.
- A business needs sales to survive. Consumers loyalty is tied closely with consumer satisfaction and ease of browsing. If a site has a poor service or browsing features, the next retailer is only one click away. Consumers may do plenty of browsing on your web site, but may not make a purchase, or purchase the same or similar item elsewhere.

Adding E-commerce to your Agri-business (Agdex #845-8) is available at all Alberta Agriculture district offices, on-line at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/diversify> (under Direct Marketing), or at the Publications Office, 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

For more information on e-commerce and agri-business, contact Lisa Houle (403) 340-5369, toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000.

Contact: Lisa Houle
(403) 340-5369

Focus on 4-H – an exciting weekend

How much action and variety can 550 Alberta 4-H'ers pack into three days? On July 1 to 3, 2001, ***Focus on 4-H***, the northwest Alberta 4-H regional show, brought together an almost endless assortment of projects for display at Edmonton Northlands Agricom. Everything from standard 4-H projects (horse and cattle shows) to newer projects (canine, llama and goat shows), judging competitions to a life skills bench show, the event was an impressive assortment of activities for spectators and 4-H'ers.

"4-H'ers come in with more and more projects every year, and get more and more involved with Focus on 4-H," explains Flossie Bodell, promotions and sponsorship coordinator for the event. "When the kids get involved, it's really exciting."

This year's events ranged from costume shows for both goat and canine projects, to pole bending and barrel racing, and a bison information booth.

This is one of the largest Alberta 4-H shows of the year. Although it is the Northwest 4-H regional show, this year saw a number of eastern Alberta delegates taking part. The show usually draws thousands of spectators, with some coming from as far away as Saskatchewan just to check it out.

The event gives 4-H members a chance to demonstrate the skills they've gained and introduces them to the myriad of different projects that other 4-H'ers enjoy. Members, parents and leaders have the opportunity to take in various conferences, ranging from farm safety talks to strategies for building stronger clubs. In such a setting, there's no limit to how much 4-H members can take home with them. "There's a tremendous amount that they gain by going to conferences or by seeing other projects. It's a huge learning curve," says Bodell. "Through Focus on 4-H, they get a little more involved and find out what 4-H can be."

For more information or to join 4-H, call (780) 674-8248 (toll free in Alberta by dialing the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Jocelyn McKinnon
Northwest 4-H Regional Specialist
(780) 674-8250

Industry gives feedback to dairy governance team

About 65 producer delegates, processors and milk haulers met with the Dairy Industry Governance Team on June 18, 2001 in Nisku to hear the team's progress to date and to provide future direction. The team's mandate is to shift the control of the dairy industry governance away from government and into the hands of industry stakeholders.

Presentations given by team members at the meeting included: team terms of reference, role, vision, mission and characteristics of the new organization, as well as a recommended governance model. This presentation, along with a directions document summarizing the teams progress, is on the Dairy Industry Governance Team's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/dairygovernance>. These documents may also be obtained from Yvonne Grabowsky, project leader with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, by calling her at (780) 361-1231, Wetaskwin.

The governance structure that the team recommends falls under the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act and consists of three overall components:

- Producer Board – democratically elected producer board members.
- Joint Producer/Processor Committee(s) – at least one committee would discuss joint producer/processor issues, advise and provide recommendations to the board. There may also be regulated committees, standing committees or other ad hoc committees.
- Negotiating Agency – the board would assign this agency predetermined issues. The Agency deals with items, which normally have a contract or agreement, and they meet dependent on the agreement timelines. It would be made up of an equal number of producers and processor members plus a chair.

Decisions made by the agency are binding on the board as well as all parties involved in the agreement and can be subject to arbitration. This agency is created through regulation and often the cost is borne by both producers and processors. It has a more formal structure than committees and is not ad hoc.

"This is the overall framework of the governance structure," says Grabowsky. "Over the next few months, the roles will be more clearly defined."

At a meeting on June 19th, the Governance Team decided to place four items with the Negotiating Agency: price allocation – distribution of the price change set by the board relative to class/component; payment policy or timing of payments; producer security – security of payments to a producer; and, milk allocation – policies and procedures on milk distribution in the province.

During the Industry meeting, participants met with team members in small groups to provide comments on opportunities, risks and challenges to the dairy industry unde the new model. They also suggested makeup of a producer board, made suggestions for items that would be dealt with through a Negotiating Agency and, shared overall comments about the process to date. The input provided will assist the team with future decision making.

Please contact any member of the Governance team for further information about this meeting, or with any suggestions regarding the project.

- Producers – Bruce Beattie, Lorrie Jespersen, Aart Okkema Rients Palsma, Bill Feenstra, Bill Van Rootselaar, Lenard Crozier
- Processors – Barry Northfield, David Etherington, Brian Miller, Anthony Oetelaar, Gary Reid, Yves Leroux, Bill McLeod
- Project Leader – Yvonne Grabowsky, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Members of the Agricultural Products Marketing Council; Dairy Board; Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; and, Alberta Justice are also resources to this project.

Contact:	*Yvonne Grabowsky*	*Maureen Bolen*
	(780) 361-1231	*(403) 934-3355*

4-H'ers getting ready for Provincial Dairy Show

With less than a month to go until the 4-H Provincial Dairy Show, 65 Alberta 4-H members are getting their projects read for the big event.

The show, to be held at the Red Deer Westerner grounds from July 17 to 19, will bring together members from seven 4-H Dairy clubs. Sponsored by Gas Alberta, the Alberta Dairy Industry and 4-H Programs Trust, the Provincial Dairy show quizzes delegates on their knowledge of dairy animals and th dairy industry, and gives them the chance to demonstrate the skill in clipping, showing and judging dairy animals.

"We want participants to learn about the dairy industry and about their animals. The Dairy Quiz, for example, is focused on their project books, and gives them a heightened level of knowledge about their animals," says Jen Bishop, the Dairy Show coordinator for the 4-H branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

At the show, dairy industry professionals will judge the participants' animals and teach the 4-H'ers what to look for i dairy animals. "As the judges give their comments, the kids

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often think, 'Oh, right, I should have been looking for that'," adds Bishop. "From the experts in the field, they gain an appreciation of the importance of having quality animals and they increase their own judging skills."

4-H members participate in the Dairy Show at three levels: junior (ages 9 to12 year olds), intermediate (13 to 15 year olds) and senior (16 to 21 year olds). Members spend at least 10 months working with their animals prior to the show, though many of them have worked on dairy projects for much longer. "Most of them start as juniors and stay with it until they finish their careers as seniors around the age of 16 or 17," explains Bishop.

Spectators are always welcome to visit the Dairy Show, and often come away with a greater appreciation of just how much work goes into the process of getting milk from the farm to the table. "This is where milk comes from, not from the carton," Bishop says.

For more information on the 4-H Provincial Dairy Show or to join 4-H, call (780) 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta by dialing the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Jen Bishop
(780) 427-4462

Assessing the image of your enterprise

The importance of a business's visual message sent to customers is well known. The problem starts when it comes to making that visual presentation effective.

"It's not an easy job," says Slav Heller, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, St. Paul. "It all begins with the development of a basic image that is consistently expressed through the business' marketing activities. It is advisable to seek the help of a marketing consultant and a graphic designer to start the process. To implement their work, a printer, sign maker, web site designer and an advertising agency may possibly be needed."

It makes sense to start early and on the right foot. If the business is already established it is likely that there have already been different forms of visual presentation developed. This can make it more difficult and costly to get the business on a new visual track. Whatever stage of the business, seeking professional help when developing or revamping the business image is a good step.

"Business image all starts with the name," adds Heller. "Second is a logo, which is a simple graphic image that can be easily associated with the business. Lettering style and dominant colours also contribute to the image along with the general style of the business' visual 'look'."

Once a visual image is developed, it can be incorporated into everything the business does. The business should send a consistent message in its signs, stationary, labels, packages, promotional and advertising materials, web site, business wear and accessories and even vehicles. A business' visual image should speak loudly of its unique and high quality products and its customer oriented way of operating.

"Having a professionally developed business image reinforces a marketing message and it makes all consecutive marketing less expensive," says Heller. "Once you have the main material, you have what you need to build a consistent visual message. An initial investment in artistic work can start to pay back very quickly."

Treat the venture of seeking professional people to help with the development of a business image the same as any other business venture. Shop around. Get estimates and quotes. Ask to see examples of previous work. Supply information about the business and examples of visuals that have been used to date. Look for professionals that are willing to spend the initial time with you to truly understand the business, the potential market and the business' needs.

For further information and advice, contact the local Alberta Agriculture rural development specialists – business:

Kerry Engel	Westlock	(780) 349-4465
Lisa Houle	Red Deer	(403) 340-5369
Sharon Homeniuk	Stony Plain	(780) 963-6101
Tim Keating	Falher	(780) 837-2211
Slav Heller	St. Paul	(780) 645-6301
Kathy Lowther/ Donna Fleury	Airdrie	(403) 948-8537
Janice McGregor	Morinville	(780) 939-4351
Leona Reynolds-Zayak	Vermilion	(780) 853-8101
Linda Hawk	Medicine Hat	(403) 529-3616
Lynn Stegman	Red Deer	(403) 340-7010
Jan Warren	Vulcan	(780) 485-5116
Marian Williams	Camrose	(780) 679-1210

Contact: Slav Heller
(780) 645-6301

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Trouble with beavers?

The Agri-Facts factsheet, ***Control of Beaver Damage*** (Agdex #681-1) was recently revised. This factsheet provides information on beaver biology, the damage this animal can do, and how to control beaver damage. The section on prevention, gives several helpful suggestions, from installing a drain pipe through the dam to installing beaver guards. More extreme methods of beaver damage prevention are also discussed for extreme situations. The factsheet is available at all Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development district and regional offices and from the Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. It can also be downloaded from the Alberta Agriculture web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/600/681-1.html>.

Water Act registration forms

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development client serv representatives in Alberta Agriculture district offices, can hel producers fill out their *Water Act* registration forms. If you require assistance in filling out the registration form, call to make an appointment and then be sure to bring the followin information with you:

- legal land descriptions of all owned and rented lands
- sources of water supply
- the date the water was first used for raising animals or applying pesticides (regardless of who used it)
- the volume of water being used (charts are included with the registration form that help in figuring this out)
- well depths
- highest number of livestock kept for a three-month perio during 1996 to 1998
- grazing dates and locations
- a battery or solar powered calculator

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Agri-News

July 16, 2001

Canadian grain industry faces minimal risk from karnal bunt

The recent report of karnal bunt being found in Texas brings the number of American states with confirmed infestations of this disease to four. New Mexico, Arizona and California are the other states that have this wheat disease. Reports that Oklahoma and Kansas also have the disease have not been substantiated, and these states are still considered free of karnal bunt. The presence of karnal bunt in Texas clearly demonstrates that the disease has moved. The remaining states in the U.S. wheat belt are as concerned as Canadian growers.

"Karnal bunt is a disease that replaces the wheat kernel with a black mass of fungal spores in a manner very similar to stinking bunt in wheat," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "When the crop is harvested, the spores become distributed throughout all the healthy grain from the field. The primary mechanism of spread is by seed infested with spores."

Karnal bunt has a minimal effect on crop production. The disease is harmless to humans, but it can impart a foul odour to wheat and flour when the disease incidence in the field is greater than two per cent. The main impact of this disease is economic. Eighty countries have bans on the importation of wheat from infested regions or countries.

"Although the neighbouring wheat growing states are very concerned about karnal bunt moving in from Texas, growers on the Canadian prairies face a minimal risk of this disease entering Canada," says Calpas. "Karnal bunt is not in Canada, nor is it present in the northern wheat growing states in the U.S. There is a wide buffer zone of vigilant states between Texas and Canada that are bent on ensuring that karnal bunt does not move any further north."

The disease is a quarantine pest in Canada, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is responsible for protecting the Canadian grain industry from this disease. The CFIA has closed the Canadian border to wheat shipments from Texas.

Alberta Agriculture Pest Prevention and Management Unit specialists are also monitoring the situation and are prepared to do what it takes to protect the province's grain industry.

Contact: Jim Calpas
(780) 422-4911

This Week

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Province to ensure responsible intensive livestock operations

The Alberta government has assumed legislative responsibility for intensive livestock operations (ILOs). The move follows three years of public consultations and recommendations relating to the province's ILOs.

Alberta's livestock industry accounts for more than 60 per cent of the province's farm cash receipts. When combined with processing, shipping and other related business, the livestock industry contributes an estimated $17 billion in provincial economic activity and provides thousands of jobs.

The province's action is in response to concerns from the livestock industry and other Albertans regarding the development of intensive livestock operations. The need to address the sustainable growth of the industry, protection of the environment, effects on neighbors and consistency in approvals, monitoring and enforcement, is the basis for the strategy.

The strategy builds on recommendations in the report from the Sustainable Management of the Livestock Industry in Alberta committee, chaired by Albert Klapstein, MLA-Leduc. It also builds on the recommended legislative framework developed by the Livestock Regulations Stakeholder Advisory Group presented to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in May of 2000.

"With the planned legislation and a provincial authority responsible for siting and on-going monitoring and enforcement of regulations, Albertans can feel confident that the livestock industry is practicing good environmental stewardship and that our health and the air, water and soil are being protected," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "As well, the industry can count on a consistent, science-based decision making process. Our goal is to support sustainable growth of the livestock industry, protect the environment and meet the needs of our rural communities."

With this strategy, rural communities will continue to hold an important role in the siting of ILOs. "We want to work in partnership with municipalities, who have held the responsibility for siting and monitoring of ILOs," adds McClellan. "We will need their help to meet the long-term needs of the industry as a whole and to ensure local concerns are addressed."

The provincial government's strategy includes the following key initiatives:

- Provincial legislation for intensive livestock operations with a regulatory framework that includes:
  - a provincial approval process for new and expanding ILOs
  - technical standards, ongoing monitoring and enforcement
  - provincial approval authority for the siting of ILOs
- Expansion of the mandate of the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB), to review applications, issue approvals and monitor and enforce provincial standards related to intensive livestock operations.
- A key role for municipalities in the provincial approval process that uses municipal expertise and recommendations in relation to siting.
- A consistent and transparent approval process for new and expanding intensive livestock operations under the proposed legislation for the consistent application of science-based standards.
- Implementation of comprehensive monitoring and enforcement activities to ensure compliance with province-wide standards.

"We have spent a considerable amount of time gathering public input and looking at the options related to the livestock industry," says McClellan. "This is a very important issue that required the extensive and comprehensive review it has been given. We have been able to build on the work presented to the government last year by the Livestock Regulations Stakeholder Advisory Group. We are now ready to proceed as we have promised."

The strategy will be developed over the next several months and legislation will be brought forward in the fall session of the Legislature.

Copies of the *Sustainable Management of the Livestock Industry in Alberta* committee report and recommendations are available at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/sml/> or by calling (780) 427-0391.

Contact: *Louise Starling*
Head, Livestock Operations Branch
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(403) 340-5306

Albert Klapstein – MLA-Leduc
Chair – Sustainable Management of the Livestock Industry in Alberta committee
(780) 415-0989

Bill Kennedy
Natural Resources Conservation Board
(780) 422-1952

Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 and then the number

Special crops featured at CDCN open house

Field peas, lentils, mustard, chickpeas, peppermint, canaryseed and sugar beets are just some of the special crops grown in Alberta. "Last year there were approximately 900,000 acres of special crops planted in the province," says Dr. Stan Blade, leader of the New Crop Development Unit at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "The estimated farm gate value of these crops exceeded $150 million in 2000."

Dry field peas account for the largest proportion of special crops planted in the province. Last year, acreage increased by 40 per cent to 660,000 acres. "Although Saskatchewan has the largest acreage of field peas in Canada, Alberta tends to record the highest yields," says Dr. Blade. "The estimated field pea acreage in Alberta continued to increase in 2001 and is estimated to be 700,000 acres."

The efforts of Alberta Agriculture have contributed to this increased growth and research and technology transfer by the staff of the New Crop Development Unit have helped growers expand their acreage. The unit became of an integral part of CDCN in 1995, complementing the existing horticultural activities.

Anyone interested in learning more about special crops is invited to attend the Open House at the CDCN on July 24, 2001. The open house is being held to celebrate the Centre's 50th anniversary of being a vital part of the Department of Agriculture.

The July 24 open house runs from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. The Honorable Lois E. Hole, Lieutenant Governor, and the Honorable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, will be on hand to officially open the day's activities. Everyone is invited to attend this free afternoon at CDCN. The Centre is located at 17507 Fort Road in northeast Edmonton. No pre-registration is required

Visitors will have an opportunity to see displays depicting aspects of the programs at the Centre that support horticulture and special crop producers across Alberta. CDCN staff will present general interest talks throughout the afternoon. "You will have the chance to discuss the latest results from pulse research conducted at the Centre, including field pea breeding and agronomy, and the work with chickpea, faba bean and low-THC hemp," adds Blade. "In addition, there will be displays from industry partners and research associates, including a demonstration of essential oil distillation and innovative research equipment."

For more information about special crops and the New Crop Development Unit, contact Dr. Stan Blade at (780) 415-2311. For more information about the open house, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 415-2305.

Contact:	*Betty Vladicka*	*Dr. Stan Blade*
	(780) 415-2305	*(780) 415-2311*

Grand opening of the Lethbridge Irrigation Demonstration Farm

The grand opening of the Canada-Alberta Crop Development Initiative's (CACDI) Lethbridge Irrigation Demonstration Farm on July 6 marks the culmination of four years of intensive planning. CACDI is a unique partnership between Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), and various agricultural organizations. The main purpose of the initiative is to promote the commercial development and adoption of irrigation-based crop diversification and environmentally sustainable farming technologies in Alberta.

"In 1997, the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council completed a study on the future of farming and the agri-food processing industry," says Ron Howard, director at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "Research and development were seen to be key factors in the continuing effort to decrease agricultural production costs, while maintaining high levels of productivity and quality. The study recommended that the industry forge stronger research partnerships and regional collaborations to offset reduced research & development budgets and produce results specific to local needs. It also recognized a need for innovative approaches that would reduce the time needed for new technologies to be adopted by producers and to expedite the move of research findings from test plots, to small-scale field research, to realistic on-farm commercial development. Thus, the concept for CACDI was born."

CACDI will:

- be a world-class initiative that focuses on field-scale demonstration and applied research activities to meet the current and future needs of producers and agri-businesses in Alberta
- accelerate the uptake of new, leading-edge irrigation technologies by producers, and serve as an incubator for commercial ventures based on irrigated crop production

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- promote value-added processing of irrigated crops by facilitating market research and collaboration between processors, producers and researchers
- integrate forage, fodder and management technologies to support a sustainable livestock industry
- demonstrate technologies and practices that promote on-farm water use efficiency
- develop, refine and test ways to diversify and intensify irrigated crop production
- evaluate the impact of irrigated farming on the environment and support practices that will sustain soil and water resources
- act as a facilitator of research links with other research & development programs, both within and outside of Alberta

The Lethbridge Irrigation Demonstration Farm, an 80-hectare (200 acre) site near the Lethbridge Research Centre, was developed by CACDI in 2000 and began operating in the 2001 growing season. The site features one 26-hectare (65 acre) and two 13-hectare (32 acre) pivot circles, using the latest in irrigation equipment. In addition, land is available for small-field research projects using a 12-hectare (30 acre) fenced strip and the pivot corners.

Demonstration trials at the Farm will be integrally tied to research work being done at the Lethbridge Agriculture Centre, the CDCS, and by other organizations and educational institutions. Cooperating agriculture and agri-food industry companies will be directly involved in these trials. Future development could include the establishment of other demonstration farms in southern Alberta, as well as expansion of the CACDI concept to other areas of the province.

Contact: *Ron Howard*
(403) 362-1328
Don Young
(403) 381-5130
Brent Paterson
(403) 381-5143

135 expected at 4-H Horse Classic program

Top delegates to earn trip to Denver Horse Round-Up Competition

One of the biggest 4-H horse programs will put the skills of more than 135 equine enthusiasts to the test, with the top four senior members earning a trip to Denver for their efforts.

The Horse Classic program, running August 1 to 3, 2001 at Olds College, teaches new skills to participants while re-enforcing their previous knowledge in a series of lectures, quizzes and demonstrations. Although participants don't spend any time on horse back at the program, they invariably come away with greater knowledge about all areas of horse riding, training and health. "They learn new skills from the program and from other delegates, and build on their pre-existing skills," said Jen Bishop, program coordinator with the 4-H Branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "There are a lot of confidence builders in the program because there is a wide range of members who work together on the different challenges that are posed to them."

Sponsored by SSG Gloves, Gas Alberta Inc., Alberta Motor Association, UFA, Lammle's Western Wear, and Burwash Brand Horse Gear, the program involves a number of different sections on which participants are judged. The Horse Bowl tests delegates' knowledge in a Reach For the Top-style quiz game, while the marketing contest and illustrated talks and demonstrations allow them to showcase their skills and knowledge for a group of judges. The most challenging portion of the program is the Hippology Contest, which tests delegates through equine identification stations, judging, visual quizzes and team problems. The top four senior participants in the Hippology Contest will earn a spot on the Alberta 4-H team that will take part in the Denver Round-Up Horse Competition in January.

"Going to Denver is a big deal, not only to members and their families, but also to the Alberta 4-H Branch," said Bishop. "We're proud of all the delegates that compete. They have to earn this trip, and whether they're at the top or the bottom, we're still just as proud."

As well as putting their equine knowledge to the test, there will be opportunities for delegates to socialize and make new friends at both a pizza party on the first night of the program and a dance on the following evening. "We hope that delegates will leave the program with more knowledge, more friends and great 4-H memories," said Bishop.

For more information or to join 4-H, call (780) 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta by dialing the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Jen Bishop*
(780) 427-4462

Agri-News Briefs

Pulse update for novice pea growers

Ever wondered what's happening in pea research in the Edmonton area? That's exactly what will be discussed at the Pulse Update for Novice Pea Growers event being held on July 30, 2001 at the Namao Agronomy Site. The event starts at 1:30 p.m. with discussion on Alberta pea and fababean regional trials, pea micronutrients, plant breeders' rights, pea screening, pulse inoculation and new pea genetics. The update is sponsored by the Zone 3 Alberta Pulse Growers, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Barrhead office, and Crop Diversification Centre North. The Namao Agronomy Site is three miles north of Highway 37 on Highway 28; then one quarter of a mile west on Carbondale Road. For further information, contact Ken Lopetinsky, pulse crops agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Barrhead, (780) 674-8213.

Pulse industry field research update

The Alberta Pulse Growers – Zone 3 and the Barrhead Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development office are sponsoring a Pulse Industry Field Research Update on July 31, 2001 for professionals involved in the pulse industry. The day starts at 7:30 with a complimentary pancake breakfast at the Westlock Community Centre and at 9:00 the tour moves to the Wes Latimer Farm (two miles west of Westlock). The field research update will cover pea co-op trials, inoculants, plant breeders' rights, pea disease, pea screening trials, and micronutrients. For more information, contact Ken Lopetinsky, pulse crops agronomist with Alberta Agriculture, Barrhead, (780) 674-8213.

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Agri-News

July 23, 2001

2001 collaborative fusarium head blight survey

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is collaborating with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada on a fusarium head blight (FHB) survey. As in 1999 and 2000, the focus for this general survey is on wheat because FHB symptoms are much more distinct compared to those occurring in barley.

"This summer, we would like to survey commercial wheat fields for FHB, especially in areas of Alberta where the disease has been occurring at trace levels for the last couple of years," says Ieuan Evans, plant pathology research scientist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "The goal of the survey is to provide some estimate of FHB levels in commercial fields in areas where *Fusarium graminearum* has been found. Alberta Agriculture cereal and oilseed specialists are helping with this survey to achieve a larger sample size and make the information more useful on a province-wide basis.

"We are asking Alberta wheat growers to take special notice of their crops as soon as the wheat heads-out in July. If you are growing wheat this year, please give your local Alberta Agriculture office a call and ask for further information on the survey."

The tentative goal of the general survey is to collect samples from approximately 250 fields from across Alberta. "Remember, you are looking for prematurely fully or partially bleached heads on healthy green stems. Such head injury from this disease will be common in many fields in Manitoba, but to date rare or absent in Alberta," adds Evans.

Sample collection, storage and shipping

- Assess and collect samples along a 'diamond-shaped' path, starting at least 25 m (82 ft) in from the edge of the field
- At each of three sites along a diamond-shaped path, non-selectively look at 100 heads (300/field total) when plants are at the late milk to early dough stage of development.
- It is critical to assess and collect samples at the correct growth stage.
- Make sure sites are at least 50 to 100 m apart.
- At each site, count and record the number of heads with any typical symptoms of FHB (e.g. 0 out of 100; 5 out of 100; 10 out of 100, etc.). Mechanical clicker counters can help to make this easier.

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- Record the ratings on the sheet that will be sent out to you.
- At each site, collect any infected heads and put them in separate labeled paper bag(s) for each site and field.
- If unsure about the symptoms, contact one of Alberta Agriculture's plant pathologists for further information.
- No matter the disease level, make sure to record the location of each of the fields, and the stage of growth when disease was assessed and samples collected.
- Background information relating to the variety, rotation and tillage system used would also be useful, if this information is readily available.
- If you observe FHB symptoms on heads that are not included as part of your assessments or samples in a particular field, these can be collected, but make sure to place them in a separate paper bag and label it accordingly.
- Sample heads can be brought back to your office for drying and storage. You may want to leave the bags scattered on a clean dry desk to let the heads dry thoroughly.
- Make sure that the room where samples are located doesn't get too hot.
- For shipping, place sampled heads into a sturdy cardboard box.
- Lightly pack the samples to avoid crushing the dried heads.
- Use more than one box if required.
- Ship samples via the government courier to T.K. Turkington, c/o Field Crop Development Centre, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 5030 – 50 Street, Lacombe, AB T4L 1W8.

Survey results will be sent out during the winter of 2002.

Contact: Ieuan Evans
(780) 422-0719

Grasshopper outbreaks

Grasshopper populations are reaching numbers in excess of 75 grasshoppers per square metre (m2) in areas across the province. Reports of these high numbers are coming from practically all areas of the province, from the Peace to the southeast. The outbreaks are sporadic, here and there, but for those growers dealing with the high numbers, the situation is serious. The economic thresholds for control are 13 grasshoppers/m2 in the field and 25 grasshoppers/m2 in the roadside ditches. The numbers of hoppers in these areas are well above the economic threshold and control is required.

"The hot dry weather conditions over the last two weeks has fuelled the grasshopper situation," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Hoppers like it hot and dry. When temperatures are high the grasshopper metabolism is up and they are very hungry. Conversely the crops are suffering with the lack of moisture and are less able to recover from grasshopper injury."

Most of the reported damage is coming from hay fields and pasture, but all crops can be affected. Some hay producers have gone into their fields to cut their hay in an attempt to salvage what they can before the hoppers eat it all. It is estimated that 15 per cent of the hay acreage in the Bonnyville area has been salvaged in this manner over the last two weeks.

Some producers in the southeast have decided that because of the drought, they have no crop to save from the hoppers.

"Alberta farmers have faced hopper outbreaks before, and most growers knew that hoppers would be a problem again," continues Calpas. "The last large-scale hopper outbreak was in 1984 and '85. It usually takes two to three dry years for the hoppers to build their populations to epidemic proportions. This is then followed by two outbreak years before nature takes its course and numbers subside."

Even with these outbreaks, this season is rated as a moderate grasshopper year because the populations are not uniformly high across the province. The concern is what next year will bring. If August is hot and dry, the female hoppers will be laying large numbers of eggs and producers will potentially be looking at a serious grasshopper year in 2002, with high numbers of hoppers across the province. Rain in August can disrupt egg laying, and that would act as a preventative measure against an outbreak the following year

A number of insecticides are available. Matador, Decis, Furadan, Malathion and Sevin are some of the insecticides registered for grasshoppers. For some growers the bran bait insecticide products are preferred because they can be more environmentally friendly. The bait has to be eaten before the insect is killed and this reduces the effect of the insecticide application against non-target insects including beneficial insects. Farmers are advised to contact their crop specialists for specific control recommendations.

Contact: Jim Calpas
(780) 422-4911

Horticulture, a growing industry

Next time you're driving in rural Alberta, take a closer look at the crop growing in the field. It may not be barley or canola as expected, but rather potatoes, carrots or cabbage.

"Horticulture crops accounted for almost 13 per cent of the Alberta crop cash receipts in 2000," explains Betty Vladicka, horticulture development specialist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton.

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Horticultural production has been steadily growing in Alberta. Potato acreage has increased considerably over the last few years, primarily because of the development of two new processing facilities in southern Alberta. "This year, around 51,800 acres are in potatoes, almost double what was planted in 1997," says Vladicka. "Two thirds of the acreage is processing potatoes, but there are 12,800 acres of seed potatoes planted in the central area of the province."

The greenhouse industry in Alberta has also seen significant growth. According to a study conducted in June 2000, the size of the industry is estimated at 11.761 million square feet (1.09 million square meters), or approximately 270 acres (109 ha). The value of the industry is estimated to be about $95 million. Major crops grown include vegetables, bedding plants, cut flowers, potted ornamentals, foliage plants and tree seedlings.

"The Alberta horticultural industry is more than greenhouse crops and potatoes," adds Vladicka. "There are also market gardeners who grow significant amounts of strawberries and raspberries for the u-pick market. There are vegetable growers all across the province who sell to the supermarkets and farmers' markets. Saskatoons are grown from the Peace to Medicine Hat."

In addition to food crops, the horticulture industry also provides the beauty for Alberta yards and landscapes. Gross sales of Alberta trees and shrubs were over $30 million in 2000 with more than 4000 acres in production. Sod production accounts for about another 5000 acres with more than $12 millions of sales.

Anyone wishing to learn more about the horticulture industry is invited to attend the open house at CDCN on July 24, 2001. The Centre is celebrating 50 years of service to horticulture and agricultural producers. "Visitors will have an opportunity to see displays depicting aspects of all the programs at the Centre that support the horticultural industry," says Vladicka. "The staff throughout the afternoon will present general interest talks. Producers will also have the chance to discuss the latest results from research conducted at the Centre."

The open house runs from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. The Honorable Lois E. Hole, Lieutenant Governor, and the Honorable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, will be on hand to officially open the day's activities. Everyone is invited to attend this free afternoon at CDCN. The Centre is located at 17507 Fort Road in northeast Edmonton. No pre-registration is required.

For more information about the CDCN open house, contact Vladicka at (780) 422-1789.

Contact: Betty Vladicka
(780) 422-1789

Bringing BBQ trends back to the farm

A recent trend report by *The Food Channel* indicates that the barbecue industry is growing. "If you are a farm-direct marketer, agri-tourism operator or involved in developing rural community events, this could have some application to your business," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock.

Statistics taken from the *Barbecue Usage and Attitude Study* by the Barbecue Industry Association indicate that:

- the number of barbecue occasions has grown from 1.4 billion in 1987 to 3 billion in 1999. Over the same period, barbecue grill unit sales increased from 11.6 million to 14.9 million annually. Three out of four households own a barbecue grill. About 41 per cent of grill owners keep more than one unit at home.
- half of all grill owners use charcoal. Charcoal briquette sales increased from 758,000 tons in 1987 to 912,000 tons in 1999. Fifty-seven per cent of all grills are used year-round. Cold-weather grilling is most common among gas grill owners (64 per cent), but charcoal chefs (41 per cent) also like to brave the elements.

Some thoughts, from a U.S. point-of-view on what lies ahead, taken from *The Food Channel* report, include:

- the taste for smoky flavors will be reaching far beyond the grill, while hot/sweet fruit-based barbecue sauces will go mainstream in a big way. Butchers will merchandise a much wider range of BBQ-friendly cuts.
- soy-based burgers will gain more respect as a grilling alternative. More people will do their grilling over natural lump charcoal and Americans will show greater interest in the barbecue of other cultures.
- wine will gain ground as a preferred beverage with barbecue. Barbecue restaurants will complete their conquest of all 50 states and top restaurants will invite barbecue stars to serve as guest chefs. Haute BBQ (as in fine dining) is not an impossible dream.

"You may be asking how this American information applies to Alberta businesses, communities or farms," comments Engel. "If consumers are this serious about barbecuing, perhaps farm-direct marketers should take notice. It may mean that businesses could take the opportunity to bundle your products seasonally. Create a package of beef, chicken, lamb, fish and bison cuts that lends itself to the barbecue trend. Sell value-added products that customers can use with your meats and vegetables on the barbecue. For example marinades, barbecue sauces and spices. There are many local companies creating these products; perhaps it's time to join forces."

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For businesses marketing through a Farmers' Market, find out if your products can be barbecued on the premises. The smell alone should drive up sales. Remember there are electric barbecues that can be used for demonstrations, too.

"Incorporating a barbecue theme into the local fair; as a special theme for a Farmers' Market or designating a certain region the 'Barbecue Trail' could spark consumer interest," says Engel. "Consider co-venturing with other local producers and designate a weekend in your area as the Great Alberta Barbecue Festival. Gourmet food tours and schools occur all over the world. If students can learn French cooking in a castle in France, why not pursue the idea of offering a course that teaches students how to barbecue on an Alberta ranch?"

For more facts and figures, check out the BIA web site at <www.bbqind.org>. If you're very seriously into barbecue, be it for personal or commercial reasons, the place to go is <www.smokering.net>. The Smoke Ring trumps all other info sources, with links to 495 barbecue web sites. For more information on *The Food Channel* check out <www.foodchannel.com>. For more information on farm direct marketing, contact Engel, at (780) 349-4465. In Alberta, dial 310-0000 for toll-free access.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4465

4-H'ers studying hard for Provincial Judging

Best 4-H judging delegates to earn trips to competitions in both the US and Canada

While many students are kicking back and relaxing this summer, close to 90 Alberta 4-H members are going to crank up the intensity level a few notches.

At the 4-H Judging program, scheduled to run August 10 to 12, 2001 in Olds, 4-H'ers aged 16 and older from across the province will give their best efforts in assessing livestock for health and marketability. When it's over, the top 20 finishers will have earned the right to attend a higher caliber judging program of their choice, some of which take place as far away as Montana and Colorado.

"It's competitive," explains project event coordinator Allison King, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's 4-H Branch. "Participants have to qualify at their club district and regional level to qualify for the program, so it's the cream of the crop in judging at this event."

There are four spots for Alberta 4-H delegates at the Northern International Livestock Exhibition in Billings, Montana; four at the Denver, Colorado 4-H Western Round Up; one for the Denver Western Stock Show; eight spots at Agribition in Regina; and, three places for 4-H judging delegates at the Calgary Stampede Livestock Judging School.

Delegates at the program will judge swine; sheep; beef and dairy cattle; and, both light and heavy horses. They will also be attending workshops. "Participants have seminars and instruction first, then they begin judging. They will cover a lot of ground in the three days they're at the program," says King.

The Provincial Judging program demands not only a high degree of judging skill and knowledge, but also requires participants to build on skills, such as public speaking, gained at other 4-H programs. "High emphasis is placed on doing proper oral reason presentations on 90 per cent of the classes. The delegates' past experience with public speaking really shines through in these presentations," adds King.

There is also time to relax, as the program runs in conjunction with Olds Agriculture Society's Mountain View County Fair, that features chuck wagon races and grandstand shows. As well, organizers have scheduled a pizza party and dance for 4-H delegates. The program, sponsored by Alberta Treasury Branches, wraps up with a breakfast banquet on the morning of the 12th; at that time the results are announced.

For more information on joining 4-H call (780) 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta through the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Allison King
(780) 422-1834

Personal Development at 4-H Club Week program

When close to 100 Alberta 4-H members arrive in Olds later this month, they'll explore issues, challenge themselves and each other, and have fun while doing it.

The Alberta 4-H Club Week program, that runs from July 24 to 29, 2001, brings together senior 4-H'ers from across the province for a week of personal development, group projects and activities. Working in small groups, delegates discuss issues of importance to them, giving each person the chance to express his or her views and hear those of others, in an open, non-threatening setting. Participants also take part in a session called Overcoming Adversity, that gives them the opportunity to talk with people who have overcome challenges, such as immigrating to Canada, blindness and cancer.

"I think everybody should go to Club Week. It's a camp that shows you who you are," says Coreen Mathon of Innisfail, who attended Club Week last year. "You get to know the people in your small group really well. It's a place where you can talk to people."

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Sponsored by Agricore, Agrium, the Alberta Motor Association, UFA, the Bank of Montreal, United Grain Growers, Lammle's Western Wear and the Alberta 4-H Program Trust, Club Week also gives participants a chance to make new friends. When they're not sitting still, delegates participate in activities such as Mini-Olympics, group challenges and playing a game of Life that takes up an entire gymnasium. By the time the program ends, delegates have a better understanding of themselves and the world around them, and are better prepared to face life's challenges on both an individual and a group level.

For more information, or to join 4-H, call (780) 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta through the RITE line at 310-0000), or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Cara MacDuff
(403) 948-8548

Agri-News Briefs

Diagnostic field school

The diagnostic field school has been operating each summer for the past 10 years. A wide variety of pest, fertility and herbicide problems are reproduced in plots which provides attendees a visual example of some of the problems Alberta producers face in the field. The purpose of the school is to teach diagnostic techniques in an integrated fashion to department and industry agronomists. The school also provides information on recent developments in agronomy. In 2000, attendance at the school was 900. Attendees are usually people who work in various areas of agriculture, such as agronomists; research, field and sales representatives from pesticide, fertilizer and seed companies; and farmers. The school is being held from July 16 to August 3, 2001 at the U of A Ellerslie Research Facility, Edmonton. All sessions run one day, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information or to register, contact Michele Dannish (780) 422-3825.

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Agri-News

July 30, 2001

Alberta/Amsterdam joint research project

A joint research project between Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Food Processing Development Centre (FPDC) and the Agrotechnological Research Institute (ATO) in the Netherlands initiated in November 2000 to design a process for manufacturing and packaging cooked/chilled, non-cured beef products. This one-year project is funded through the Canada/Alberta Beef Industry Development Fund (CABIDF).

"Products for Home Meal Replacement (HMR) are becoming more and more popular in Canada and in Europe," says Robert Gibson, project manager at FPDC, Leduc. "Pre-cooked beef products, sold fresh and simply reheated to serve, are easy meal solutions that appeal to many Albertans. This project will evaluate processing and packaging variables that can effect quality and shelf life of cooked/chilled beef products. The aim of the project is to provide sufficient information to allow manufacturers to design a processing and packaging system for individual products that will maintain high quality and consumer satisfaction over a four- to six-week period."

Ulphard Thoden is the researcher from ATO-DLO, and Murray Fierheller and Marek Gierus are the researchers at the FPDC. The project will be run concurrently in both Centres. It will combine the strength of meat processing capabilities of the FPDC with the packaging expertise of ATO-DLO to resolve the technological hurdles in marketing cooked/chilled beef to retailers and food service operators.

During Phase 1, a ATO-DLO representative visited the FPDC to establish a set of requirements that the final product has to fulfill, establish parameters for evaluation and confirm processing and packaging variables for analysis.

"Phases 2 and 3 are being done concurrently in Alberta and Holland," says Gibson. "Meat processing specialists from Alberta's FPDC are conducting Phase 2. It involves evaluating the effect of different variables on cooked/chilled fresh beef products. Cooking methods, cooking time and temperatures, moisture levels, tenderization, and pasteurization are all being tested independently. At the same time, packaging specialists from ATO are evaluating packaging variables on the quality and shelf life of the product. Modified atmospheres, vacuum packs,

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storage and display temperature, UV light transmission, and other environmental variables are all part of the package testing."

Following this, Fierheller will visit ATO to review results and organize Phase 4 of the project. During Phase 4, ten of the most promising combinations of processing techniques and packaging concepts will be studied further. The product and packaging will be exposed to a variation of temperature and storage situations to ensure that the best possible combination of product and package are selected for cooked/chilled beef Home Meal Replacement.

"Completion of this project is anticipated by the end of October, 2001," says Gibson. "We have had considerable interest shown in this project from producers, processors and retailers. The FPDC provides information and technical assistance to over 200 companies and entrepreneurs annually, and has helped to launch over 100 new products each year to the retail, food service and export markets."

Contact: Robert Gibson
(780) 980-4866

Fusarium head blight a concern

Fusarium head blight (FHB) of cereals is a disease of concern for Alberta. FHB has caused cereal yield and quality losses in hundreds of millions of dollars in Manitoba and has now moved westward into eastern Saskatchewan. Isolated incidents of FHB have been reported, but at trace levels in Alberta last year and that certainly warrants a closer watch for the disease in the province.

"*Fusarium graminearum*, is the particular type of FHB fungus that is of the greatest concern," says Ieuan Evans, plant pathology research scientist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "FHB of this type of fungus renders wheat and barley infected at levels exceeding two per cent useless for human consumption needs and unfit as feed grain for hogs and other monogastrics."

Symptoms of this type of FHB include:

- blighted and partially blighted wheat heads
- barley and wheat florets with pinkish/orangish sporulation
- blighted wheat floret
- discoloured barley heads

"Not all FHB damaged kernels are pinkish," adds Evans. "Fusarium graminearum infected kernels may contain the mycotoxin Deoxynivalenol (DON). Usually a five per cent level of FHB generally translates into five parts per million (ppm) DON. It is the DON that destroys the value of the grain. Any grain, barley, wheat, rye, oats, triticale or corn, with more than one ppm DON is unsuitable as hog feed and two ppm for the food industry. Poultry, pets, horses and other monogastrics, humans included, are significantly affected by levels of two ppm DON or more. Cattle, with their complex digestive systems can eat grain with up to 12 ppm DON."

FHB impacts grain by reducing yield, thousand kernel weight, kernel plumpness, grade and end-use quality characteristics. Feed grain that is contaminated by the mycotoxin DON results in reduced feed intake, reduced weight gain and compromised breeding cycles in monogastrics.

"Producers in Manitoba must manage for FHB every year. The first step in Alberta is to use seed tested free of *F. graminearum*, combined with seed treatment. This avoids introducing the pathogen into clean fields," says Evans.

Other management steps, if or when the disease is present, include:

- choice of seed variety – all cereals are susceptible, but differ in degree of susceptibility
- crop rotation – two or more years between cereal production. Continuous or short rotation cereals allows for the build-up of infected straw residues
- burning or tillage – gives questionable effectiveness as root and crown tissues remain intact with burning, and tillage doesn't bury all the residue
- stagger planting dates – humid weather during flowering in wheat or heading in barley favors infection. Avoid having all cereals on the farm flowering at the same time
- fungicide application – results have been inconsistent. This management tool provides suppression only. Application prior to infection is critical

"A harvest management practice that can be effective when dealing with an *F. graminearum* infected wheat is to adjust the combine to blow out lightweight infected kernels," says Evans. "This will reduce the amount of infected grain and, therefore, the mycotoxin levels. This is not an option with barley or oats."

During post-harvest, it is beneficial to thoroughly chop straw and spread it uniformly. This will encourage a more rapid decomposition of infected straw in all cropping systems.

"With Alberta's Fusarium Head Blight Control program underway, it is hoped that we can keep this disease under control indefinitely, or at least until we have better control procedures," adds Evans.

If concerned about FHB in your field, contact the local Alberta Agriculture office and speak to the crop specialist in the area, or contact Evans at (780) 422-0719.

Contact: Dr. Ieuan Evans
(780) 422-0719

Improving farm energy efficiency

Conserving energy isn't just about adopting new innovations. "Many tested and proven ways of conserving energy can play a vital role in keeping your farm's energy costs down," says Murray Green, farm machinery engineer for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie. "Even in crop production, early planting takes advantage of the greater amount of energy available from the sun at harvest, particularly if commodities are dried or aerated."

Some measures and practices that reduce energy costs also help other aspects of an operation, from conserving soil and soil moisture to prolonging equipment life. A few examples of options to trim energy inputs, and some recent publications where more information on energy efficiency can be found, are listed below.

Field equipment

The April 2001 issue of AgTech Center Innovator has many practical tips to lower fuel consumption by field equipment.

- tillage system – the most effective way to reduce fuel costs for tillage is to till less. Reduced tillage offers other benefits such as increased crop yields (depending on the soil zone and weather), soil moisture conservation and reduced time in the field.
- tractor fuel efficiency – some ways to improve fuel efficiency include maintaining tires at the lowest correct pressure for the load the tires are carrying; using the right fuel for the season; and performing regular maintenance. Fuel-saving measures can also prolong the life of the tractor.

For more information, see the AgTech Center Innovator (go to <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/> then click on *Newsletters*, then *AgTech Center Innovator*) or call the AgTech Centre at (403) 329-1212.

Irrigation systems

Alberta Agriculture's irrigation branch can provides energy efficient ideas on water management, equipment selection and maintenance to minimize energy costs for pumping water. Suggestions include:

- engine efficiency – perform regular maintenance, adjustments and tune-ups of the engine or motor that drives the pump.
- sprinkler system efficiency – inspect the system regularly. Make needed minor repairs such as stopping leaks, replacing worn nozzles and trimming the impeller.
- irrigation scheduling – knowing when to irrigate and the amount of water required by the crop, will result in better crops yields and less water lost to deep percolation and runoff.

For assistance with analyzing a system, contact the local irrigation specialist at the Alberta Agriculture district offices in Bow Island, Brooks, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Taber and Strathmore.

Livestock buildings

The Prairie Swine Centre Inc.'s publication called ***Energy Efficiency in Hog Barns – Part 1*** (available at <http://adminsrv.usask.ca/psci/energy.htm>) is aimed at hog barns, but some of the practices apply to any livestock barn. If you don't have access to the internet, visit your local Alberta Agriculture district office and they will print the information for you. Examples of ways to enhance energy efficiency include:

- barn maintenance – clean and adjust fans, motors, shutters, thermostats and controllers several times a year.
- lighting —converting from incandescent to fluorescent lights can lead to substantial savings.
- manure volume – you can reduce the amount of manure that must be removed from the hog barn by adjusting the ration through reducing crude protein levels, feeding pellets rather than meal, and feeding enzymes.

For information on reducing energy use in livestock facilities, contact Robert Borg of Alberta Agriculture at (403) 340-5323.

Greenhouses

Muhammad Younus of Alberta Agriculture says greenhouse heating costs can have a major effect on the livelihood of greenhouse growers. He has some energy-saving tips:

- building maintenance – to keep the heat in, make sure the greenhouse is well insulated and well sealed.
- furnace maintenance – keep the furnace well maintained and operating efficiently.
- night temperatures – reduce the temperature of the greenhouse, generally by about one degree, during the night.

A binder on greenhouse energy conservation is available for $30. Cheques are payable to the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association and requests should be mailed to Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Crop Diversification Centre North, RR 6, Edmonton, Alberta T5B 4K3.

Contact:	*Murray Green*	*Muhammad Younus*
	(403) 948-8525	*(780) 415-2317*

An essential step in direct seeding – residue management

Lack of standing, anchored stubble combined with low snowfall and days of wind led to some significant soil erosion throughout Alberta this spring. During the late 80's the province experienced some of the same problems. Some farmers at that time said never again and they made good on their promise by adopting direct seeding.

"Planning ahead is critical when switching to a direct seeding system, says Peter Gamache, team leader of Reduced Tillage LINKAGES, Edmonton. "Good residue management is one of the first and most important steps in successfully adopting direct seeding. The most practical and cost effective way is with the combine. Key points to keep in mind are: a good straw and chaff spreader is essential; stubble height should not normally exceed the row spacing of the seeding implement; and straw and chaff should be spread uniformly over the width of the header or swather cut. Reducing or eliminating fall tillage will keep straw anchored and standing to trap snow and prevent erosion."

Residue that is not spread properly creates seeding problems, such as hair pinning with disc openers, plugging between shanks of the seeder, cooler soil temperatures and delayed crop emergence. Heavy rows of straw or chaff may also tie up nitrogen. The net result is reduced crop competitiveness and yields, not to mention big time headaches at seeding.

"A straw and chaff spreader must give an even and wide distribution in the most difficult conditions," continues Gamache. "Most new combines come equipped with good straw and chaff spreaders, or can easily be fitted with an after-market product. Older combines may be more difficult to convert to a good spreading system. Cost, spread width, intended purpose (chaff spreader only or straw and chaff spreader) and type of drive varies between units."

Other tools to help manage residues include heavy harrows, baling, collecting chaff and crop rotations. Avoiding planting high residue crops back to back and alternating low residue or faster decomposing crops like canola and field peas with cereals, as well as working forages into the rotation can help. In rotations where heavy residue crops are back to back, removing the straw by baling periodically, will not be that detrimental to soil quality, especially if manure is returned to the land. Semi-dwarf varieties can help with residue management as well.

Straw and chaff management is just one of the critical pieces of putting together a direct seeding system. For more information call one of the RT LINKAGES agronomists: Pat Pavan., Lethbridge (403) 381-5857; Rick Taillieu, Olds (403) 556-8235; Ron Heller, Vermilion (780) 853-8262; Nick Underwood, Grande Prairie (780) 814-1232 or Peter Gamache, team leader, Edmonton (780) 422-7922.

A chart of chaff and straw spreaders follows this article. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy but the author and RT LINKAGES do not accept responsibility for errors and omissions. Prices may vary depending on the model of combine, adaptability of unit and extra hardware such as pumps and hoses. Prices are as of July 2001. Vittetoe, Love, Horvick, F/S Manufacturing are other models of chaff and straw spreaders that are manufactured in the United States and may or may not be still available.

For more information contact Gamache.

Contact: *Peter Gamache*
(780) 422-7922

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Brand name	Cost f.o.b. location	Width of spread	Warranty	Comments
Kirby Dutch Industries Pilot Butte, SK (306) 781-4820	$1800 and up plus G.S.T. Price vary up to $7000 for Gleaner R62 & 72.	40' to 50' depending whether spreading just chaff or both and straw moisture conditions	1 year	Primarily for chaff spreading but cone adapter can be fitted for straw spreading. Plumb into hydraulics of pickup. Gleaner combines must have straw spreader. Sales not sure of horsepower requirements.
Redekop Saskatoon, SK (306) 931-6664	$5200 - $6750 plus G.S.T.	35' to 40' varying with straw moisture conditions.	1 year on rotor blades	Spreads both chaff and straw. Easily adapted to new models of Case IH, New Holland TR96-98 series and John Deere. Will not fit older Massey combines like 760 or 860 models. Requires 25 to 35 horsepower.
Agri-Tech Mgr. (formerly Urvold) P.O. Box 87 Noblesford, AB T0L 1S0 (403) 824-3737	$4400 for hydraulic drive. $3400 for belt drive plus GST	40' varying with straw and chaff moisture conditions	1 year	Straw and chaff blower. Requires 9.5 to 11.5 h.p. Does not fit older combines such as 760 or 860 Massey but will work on newer Massey, John Deere, Case/IH and New Holland makes.
REM REM Manufacturing Box 1207 Swift Current, SK (306) 773-0644	$2933 except for JD 7720/8820 $3467	30' or more varying with straw and chaff moisture conditions	1 year	Pneumatic chaff spreader that is belt driven. Massey 750, 860, JD 95, 96, 7720 and 8820.
Hurricane Kayline Rep Sales 701 - 9th St. East Saskatoon, SK 1-800-525-8189	$1545 plus G.S.T. Belt driven units. Hydraulic optional.	30' varying with straw moisture conditions.	1 year	Primarily a chaff spreader. Maybe belt or hydraulic driven. Suggest a separate hydraulic pump and reservoir unit for Massey 760 or 860.
Crary Cyclone Apollo Distributing P.O. Box 528 White City, SK (306) 781-2644	$1990 plus G.S.T for single spinner. $2480 plus G.S.T. for double spinner.	24' to 30' varying with straw moisture conditions and weight of chaff	1 year	Primarily a chaff spreader. For Massey 750, 760 or 860 suggest single spinner. For NH TX 66 or TX 68 need cooler for hydraulics. IH 1992 60 series, 1688 and 2100 combines need special hydraulic adapters.
Rodono Rotor Rodono Industries Clive, AB T0C 0Y0 (403) 784-3864	$1850 - $2000 plus G.S.T. Add static knife for $375 - $425	30' varying with straw moisture conditions.	2 year	Upgrade for straw spreader. Thicker walled rotor replaces drum. Double number of knives. Get finer cut and more wind. Belt driven so horsepower requirements are about the same.
Mandako Mandako Agri Marketing Box 95 Plum Coulee, MB R0G 1R0 (204) 829-3348 1-888 -525-5892	$995 plus G.S.T Extra cost for flow control $125 and hoses $185 or buy locally.	30' varying with straw and moisture conditions and weight of chaff	1 year	Hydraulic driven, single spinner. Unit swings to side to allow adjustment to sieves. On Massey combines before 1981 hydraulics plumbed into power steering pump. After 1981 plumbed into hydrostatic pump.
Spreadmaster Stewart Steel Inc. Weyburn, SK (306) 842-4411	$1195 plus G.S.T	Not stated	Not stated	Chaff spreader built for IH 1680 combines exclusively. Direct drive from current spreader.

Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show

The 25th annual Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show kicked off to a sunny start at the Bashaw Agricultural Society Fair Grounds on July 14, 2001. Shawna Wallace of Hanna, Shelley Sayers of Lethbridge, and Lauren Chykalsky of Peace River, carrying Canada, Alberta and 4-H flags, led about 200 members representing 65 clubs into the ring for opening ceremonies. Ten Alberta 4-H Ambassadors opened the show with the 4-H Pledge and singing of *Oh Canada*.

Jackie Northey, of Bashaw, accepted the Friend of the 4-H Beef Heifer Show award. Northey has volunteered for this event for the last 23 years. In the presentation, Henry Wiegman, provincial 4-H agricultural specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development said, "We would have a hard time running this event without Jackie's help. She is always around to answer participant's questions and help show officials make this event the best that it can be."

Jim Harbridge, from Ivomec, announced the Alberta recipients of the 2001 scholarships, sponsored by Merial Canada. With 50 scholarships presented throughout Canada, special attention was made to the strength of Alberta's 4-H program, as recognized through the 21 recipients. Each recipient received $1000 to assist with post-secondary education.

The three-day event, depends on the generosity of the parents and community members who volunteer their time as ringsmen, judges, jeopardy hosts, announcers and record keepers. Mahlon Weir, head of Alberta Agriculture's 4-H branch presented a recognition plaque to Allan Minchau of the Alberta Cattle Commission for their sponsorship of an annual scholarship.

All 4-H members present take part at the three-day judging competition. It is divided into three age categories. Contestants move through four stations, learning and practicing a skill recognized by employers of past 4-H members. These young participants practice their ability to assess a product for a specific market and defend that decision.

Members judge bull calves, cow and calf pairs, and yearling heifers, and are marked on the results compared to the choices of a master judge. The most impressive part of this event is listening to members provide their oral reasons for placement to a judge. These future employees really demonstrate how to remain cool under pressure. There is also a game of memory, in which members familiarize themselves with four heifers and then respond to questions about what they saw.

On day three, the confirmation classes for purebreds and crossbreds took place. Dusty Howell of the Red Deer East 4-H Beef won the Supreme Grand Champion Purebred with his Black Angus yearling. Reserve Supreme Grand Champion Purebred went to Tanis Longshore of the Byemoor 4-H Beef with her Red Angus 2-year old heifer.

In the crossbred class, the supreme championship honours were both two-year-olds. Representing the Onoway 4-H Multi Club, Supreme Grand Champion went to Ryan Gonnet's 'Minnie', a Simmental Angus Cross. 'Purdy, a Simmental cross belonging to Matthew Day of the Edberg 4-H Beef Club, won reserve Supreme Grand Champion Crossbred.

Over the three days, members of every age took part in team grooming, judging, knowledge testing, showmanship and confirmation classes. And, like every well planned 4-H event, there was a lot of fun, too.

Contact: *Allison King*
4-H event coordinator, Alberta Agriculture
(780) 422-4444

Agri-News Briefs

Alberta 4-H'ers strut their stuff

The team grooming competition, at the Provincial 4-H Beef Heifer Show in Bashaw, July 14 to 16, 2001 was the start-off event. Teams of two members were allowed 20 minutes in the chute to groom a heifer of their choice. Judges Cecilia Fleming, Dawn Wilson, Ken Hays and Shelly Meakin-Chamzuk circulated as the 4-H members clipped, dried, brushed and primped the heifer from ordinary to extra-ordinary. Occasionally, a judge would stop by and ask, "What would you change about this animal?" or "What are her strengths and weaknesses?" David Schneider (8 year member) of the Bashaw 4-H Beef Club says, "Grooming is a really important part. You can make an average animal look like a million bucks. Good groomers are always in demand at cattle shows." After the grooming in the chute, it's off to the ring where the judges get a final look at the member's work. From their class, Schneider and team mate Kelly Northey (6 year member) were pleased to advance to the next round. Northey adds that good grooming requires a plan. "It's not just the work here in the chute, but what you put in before you arrive. You have to start training an animal's hair at home to get the best results." And good results were what this team was after. They received second overall out of a class of 26 seniors teams in the grooming competition. For more information contact Allison King, 4-H program coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton (780) 422-4444.

Explore Direct tours

Albertans interested in starting up a farm direct marketing or agri-tourism venture are encouraged to attend one of the five tours planned during August. The tours will provide an opportunity to learn about innovative direct marketing. The tours include participation in an interactive, educational component. Dates and locations of the tours are:

August 8, 2001	Lethbridge/Pincher Creek
August 15, 2001	Edmonton
August 21, 2001	Grande Prairie
August 22, 2001	Red Deer/Lacombe
August 29, 2001	Calgary

Cost of the tour is $25 per person. Registration deadline is one week prior to the tour date. For further information or to register, contact Eileen Kotowich at (780) 340-4465 or call toll free 1-800-387-6030. Mail registration to Alberta Agriculture, Box 160, Coronation, AB T0C 1C0. Make cheques or money orders payable to Westlock County – ASB.

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Agri-News

August 6, 2001

No direct financial assistance for grasshopper control

There have been outbreaks of very high numbers of grasshoppers reported throughout the province this year. Alberta farmers being impacted by grasshoppers have been asking whether or not there will be assistance to deal with the problem. There is no intention to develop a program to provide specific financial assistance for grasshopper control at the present time.

"The department has put in place several assistance packages to help producers deal with some of the conditions they are facing this year," says Bard Haddrell, director of agriculture information division with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The department does provide technical support through the many crop specialists and entomologists on staff. Producers are encouraged to contact Alberta Agriculture's crop specialists and entomologists for information when dealing with grasshopper or other pest problems."

"Grasshoppers thrive under dry conditions and with the dry falls and mild winters in Alberta over the last two years, populations have been building," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "Currently there are a number of insecticides registered for control of grasshoppers including; Matador, Sevin, Eco-Bait, Malathion and Decis. Always use insecticides that are registered for the particular use and read and follow label directions. Producers can also call the cereals and oilseeds helpline toll-free at 1-866-882-7677."

Assistance packages already in place that producers can apply for, include:

- The Farm Income Assistance Program 2001 (FIAP 2001): <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/fiap/index.html>. This program is designed to assist with drought conditions and will pay $4 per acre on native pasturelands through the Native Forage component. These lands correspond closely to those areas experiencing grasshopper damage. This money could be used to control grasshoppers.

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This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- The $10.29 per acre payment on cultivated acres and improved pasture acres under the Canada-Alberta Farm Income Assistance Program was established to assist Alberta farmers struggling with some difficult times through no fault of their own. These funds could also be used for control purposes. Information on this program is available on line at <http://www.gov.ab.ca/acn/200104/10587.html>.

"Both FIAP 2001 and the Canada-Alberta Farm Income Assistance Program were designed to allow farmers to make the spending decisions they feel will best assist with their specific set of circumstances," adds Haddrell. "For producers facing problems with grasshoppers, the decision to use some of these program funds for grasshopper control would be theirs to make."

Concerns over producers not controlling their grasshopper problem resulting in additional pressures on neighbouring fields that have been sprayed, can be dealt with through the local Agricultural Service Boards. Grasshoppers are named pests under the Agricultural Pests Act and the agricultural fieldman can enforce grasshopper control via the Act.

Contact:	*Jim Calpas*	*Bard Haddrell*
	(780) 422-4911	*(780) 427-5312*

Alberta greenhouse crops industry profile

A recently completed survey by the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA) estimates the current size of the greenhouse crops industry at 11.797 million square feet. Land associated with greenhouse operations is around 22,550 acres.

"Alberta's greenhouse industry is ranked fourth in the country behind Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec," says Nabi Chaudhary, senior economic analyst-crops with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's economics unit, Edmonton. "This survey was made possible with cooperation and funding from Agriculture & Food Council, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association."

"The survey helps identify that the greenhouse industry has doubled in size during the last decade," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "Use of environmental control computers has also increased significantly. In 2000, the Alberta greenhouse industry employed 1,360 full time and 2,841 part time people. Last year, gross revenue generated by the industry was at about $98 million with a total value of assets around $225 million."

This survey has generated a lot of economic information and has resulted in further cost of production studies that are currently being complied.

Mirza adds, "This survey has helped to identify the research and extension needs of the industry. It has also provided benchmark information for several years to come."

A summary of the results is available on the AGGA website <www.agga.ca >.

A detailed copy of the 2000 survey results is available by contacting Mirza (780) 415-2303 or Chaudhary (780) 422-4054. There is no cost for this report for AGGA members. Non-members can obtain a copy of this survey by sending a cheque for $ 15.00 to cover shipping and handling charges. The cheques are payable to the AGGA. Written requests and payment for the survey results can be mailed to Mohyuddin Mirza, Alberta Agriculture, CDCN, RR6, 17507 Fort Road, Edmonton, AB T5B 4K3.

Contact: *Mohyuddin Mirza*
(780) 415-2303
fax: (780) 422-6096
mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca
Nabi Chaudhary
(780) 422-4054
nabi.chaudhary@gov.ab.ca

600 attend CDCN anniversary event

On July 24, 2001, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN) celebrated 50 years of partnership with producers in Alberta. The 600 attendees at the event included past employees, producers, representatives of commodity associations and a large number of Albertans who were interested in seeing what Alberta Agriculture is doing. The Centre was set up with numerous displays featuring many of the project areas currently being researched and worked on at the facility.

"The Centre was initially a tree nursery. Over the years, the facility has evolved and now the work being done at the Centre involves our many partners in industry with research on crop varieties and crop species," says Dr. Stan Blade, director at CDCN, Edmonton. "Much of the work done at CDCN concentrates on special crops and diversified production – vegetables, fruits, herbs, medicinal plants and essential oil plants. We have a long history of working with Albertans to help them with selecting crops and varieties that will thrive in the Alberta climate.

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"The pulse industry has also seen extraordinary growth in Alberta in the past five years. There are almost 700,000 acres of field pea in the province this year. We expect that new, better-adapted field pea cultivars developed at CDCN will continue to fuel additional growth."

The celebration included opening comments and presentations by the Honorable Lois E. Hole, Lieutenant Governor, and the Honorable Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

As well as guided tours of the research plots on the 340-acre centre, numerous displays were erected to give attendees an idea of just how much the horticulture and special crops industry has grown in the province.

"Horticulture crops accounted for almost 13 per cent of the Alberta crop cash receipts in 2000," explains Betty Vladicka, horticulture development specialist at CDCN. "In 2001, approximately 51,800 acres of potatoes have been planted. That is almost double the number of acres planted only three years ago. Two thirds of the acreage is processing potatoes, but there are 12,800 acres of seed potatoes planted in the central area of the province. Alberta has a very large seed potato export market to the western United States and Mexico."

The greenhouse industry in Alberta is estimated at 11.797 million square feet (1.09 million square meters), or approximately 270 acres (109 ha). The value of the industry is estimated to be about $95 million. Major crops grown include vegetables, bedding plants, cut flowers, potted ornamentals, foliage plants and tree seedlings.

Acres devoted to strawberries and raspberries for the u-pick markets and other small fruit for processing and farmers' markets are increasing at a steady pace. Saskatoons are grown from the Peace to Medicine Hat.

In addition to food crops, the horticulture industry also provides the beauty for Alberta yards and landscapes. Gross sales of Alberta trees and shrubs were over $30 million in 2000 with more than 4000 acres in production. Sod production accounts for about another 5000 acres with more than $12 millions of sales.

The open house at CDCN not only commemorated 50 years of partnership with producers and industry, but also showcased the diversity and complexity of this growing industry in the province.

"When asked if we have any livestock here at the Centre, I always tell people that we run about 25,000 head," says Blade. "Of course, they're all bees. The Centre also houses the province's apiculture research and there are specialists here who work with beekeepers and the honey industry. Alberta produces more honey than any other province in Canada. Alberta has 750 beekeepers and the annual honey crop generates over $20 million of farm cash receipts. Add to that the added value from processing done by provincial honey packers and it is clear that this is a production industry important to the province's economy."

For more information on the CDCN, contact Betty Vladicka at (780) 415-2305.

Contact:	*Betty Vladicka*	*Dr. Stan Blade*
	(780) 415-2305	*(780) 415-2311*

Farmers' markets

Going to the farmers' market is fast becoming a 'must-do shopping stop' for many consumers. Many people feel the produce and value-added products they purchase at farmers' markets have a better taste and quality than the commercially produced items found in the large grocery stores. That coupled with the great atmosphere is enough to make regular visits to the farmers' markets a priority.

"There are both advantages and disadvantages for selling products at farmers' markets," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "Both the pros and the cons should be considered before making a commitment to be a part of the local market."

Advantages

- **Profits** – selling at farmers' markets eliminates some of the costs such as transportation, brokerage and handling fees. There is also often an exemption on packing, labeling and containers, which will save you money.
- Immediate cash flow.
- **Promotion** – allows you to pitch your product face-to-face and promote your farm and your products. Word-of-mouth advertising resulting from this can be invaluable.
- **Customer feedback and test marketing** – allows you to test new crops/products and get immediate feedback from customers. It also gives you a chance to talk about your products; share growing and cooking tips and give away free samples.
- **High personal satisfaction** and social contact.

Disadvantages

- **Limited sales volume** – you will spend a higher proportion of your time dealing with people and marketing for the volume achieved vs. other methods of moving your product. If you are planning to sell perishable products, your sales volume may not be large enough to get rid of all your product. You may have to have an alternate strategy in place for left over product.
- **Time involvement** – you will be spending a lot of time loading, hauling, unloading, setting up and taking down. You won't just be working for the five hours the market is open.

Cont'd on page 4

- **Skill set** – you will need to have a different skill set now that you aren't just concerned with production anymore. Along with the product quality, strong people skills will help you sell your products and will keep people coming back. You will also need to have strong production planning and management skills. You want to be able to pick the right amount of product for the market, not too much that there will be spoilage but enough so that your stall always looks full.
- **Special considerations** – at the farmers' market, you will encounter space limitations, product limitations, rules, policies and politics. You may also have to carry or pay for separate liability insurance as well as hire additional staff. It's a good idea to get answers to some of these questions before signing up to sell.

"One business that thrives at the farmers' market is Briggswood Country Preserves, owned by Gail Briggs," continues Engel. "Briggs owns a federally licensed jam, jelly and preserve processing facility in Rycroft. She sells much of her product at the Dawson Creek and Grande Prairie Farmers' Markets. Briggs sees the advantages of selling directly to the consumer. She often tests her new products at the market and gets immediate customer feedback. Being very market focussed, she listens to what her customers tell her about her products. She also loves educating her customers, passing along safe food handling practices, preserving techniques and information about our native fruit."

Selling at the farmers' market isn't for everyone. You need to carefully consider all your options before making your decision. Alberta Agriculture has several resources, that can be borrowed from the local rural development specialist. ***Sell What You Sow!*** and ***The New Farmers' Market*** are two excellent sources of information.

For more information on farmers' markets, call the local rural development specialist-business:

Kerry Engel	Westlock	(780) 349-4465
Lisa Houle	Red Deer	(403) 340-5369
Sharon Homeniuk	Stony Plain	(780) 963-6101
Tim Keating	Falher	(780) 837-2211
Slav Heller	St. Paul	(780) 645-6301
Kathy Lowther/Donna Fleury	Airdrie	(403) 948-8537
Janice McGregor	Morinville	(780) 939-4351
Leona Reynolds-Zayak	Vermilion	(780) 853-8101
Linda Hawk	Medicine Hat	(403) 529-3616
Lynn Stegman	Red Deer	(403) 340-7010
Jan Warren	Vulcan	(780) 485-5116
Marian Williams	Camrose	(780) 679-1210

If you are interested in diversifying into direct marketing or agri-tourism, consider attending one of the ***Explore Direct – Summer Tours*** happening in five locations in August. The tour visits several direct marketing and agri-tourism ventures. Attendees will get a chance to see what others have done with their farms. It will be an opportunity to have critical questions answered by people who have already made it past the planning stage. Brochures for the tours are available by calling (780) 349-4465 for more information.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

East meets west in 4-H/ Japanese exchange

An unforgettable experience for both visiting students and volunteer host families

It may be a long way from Alberta to Japan, but the cultural divide between the two societies is shrinking every year thanks to an ongoing exchange program involving 4-H and several Japanese youth groups.

"This can be a life-time experience. We're still in contact with some of the kids we've hosted," says Debbie DeVries, a leader with the 4-H Japanese Exchange project. Her family has been welcoming Japanese exchange students into their Vauxhall-area home for the last seven years, with positive results for both the students and her family "It's such a good learning experience for the whole family. Everyone is involved in hosting and in the communication experience."

The Japanese students are brought to Alberta through their involvement with Japan's Labo, Lex and Utrek youth programs that work with 4-H and other North American organizations to find host families for Japanese students. Rather than treating visiting students like tourists, the emphasis during these exchanges is to treat them as if they were part of a Canadian family so that they can experience Canadian culture first-hand. There is no requirement that Canadian host families speak Japanese or that Japanese students be fluent in English. In fact, many host families have found that language is no barrier to communication.

"Language wasn't a big problem, because kids can communicate," says Carol Selte, whose family has hosted three Japanese students since 1998. "If they didn't understand what you said, then you'd speak more slowly, or you'd show them what you were talking about, or use hand gestures."

Susan Rieseberg's family has hosted Japanese students twice in the their Strathmore-area home and found communication came fairly easily. "We used a little dictionary. But kids seem to be able to laugh at themselves and pick up on things really quickly. Language didn't seem to be a barrier."

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Even simple activities, such as doing chores, playing games or just spending time with their Canadian counterparts, exposes the visiting students to both the English language and to Canadian culture. "They all seem to love games and music. They're just like kids anywhere," says Rieseberg.

Hosts are expected to treat the visiting student as part of the family, which means covering costs such as food and lodging. But the costs aren't excessive and, since many students are happy just sending time with their host family, there is no need for hosts to spend large amounts of money on their guests. "The premise of the program is to allow the students to live a Canadian lifestyle, so you don't have to tour around the province. They idolize their host brothers and sisters and do a lot of the things they do," explains Rieseberg.

After the Alberta parents have hosted their Japanese guest, Canadian students have the opportunity to visit Japan for a stay with their counterpart's family. Although parents must pay the traveling costs for their own children, some programs offer $150 scholarships to help Alberta host families cover airfare to Japan. As with the Alberta portion of the exchange, students are expected to help out with whatever tasks need to be done in their host family's home and spend time with their counterparts learning about Japanese culture. Although it may seem intimidating to leave the familiarity of home behind to face a new country and an unfamiliar language, students know each other reasonably well by the time they go to Japan and rarely have trouble finding common ground.

The exchange program also broadens the horizons of all members of the host family, adds Rieseberg. "It makes it a smaller world. We're more willing to go and try different things now. My daughter, who is 19, wants to go teach in Japan. My other daughter is 14, and she wants to go on the month-long exchange. I don't think that would have happened without this program."

Contact: *Debbie DeVries* *(403) 654-2678*
Ellen Bonde *(403) 845-6894*

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Agri-News Briefs

Mini herb fest

Taking a holistic approach to business, a two-day conference, Mini Herb Fest is being held at the Down to Earth Greenhouses, Grande Prairie, on August 11 and 12, 2001. The conference will address the development and advancement of the herbal industry in the Peace region. Topics being covered include: neutraceuticals/functional foods; culinary herbs and food; herb wild crafting; chefs and culinary herbs; herbs, health and wellness; trends and changes in the herbal marketplace; marketing herbs as a commodity; and, good farming practices. Displays of Peace Country products and demonstrations using the Alberta New Crop Network (ANCN) oil distillation unit will round out the event. Cost of the conference is $100 for the two days (meals included) for Peace Value Added Food & Ag Association (PVAFAA) members and $175 for non-members. One-day registration is also available and is $60 for PVAFAA members and $90 for non-members. Registration deadline is August 8, 2001. For further information or to register, contact Anita Schreyer (780) 568-2915 or Donna Tookey (250) 782-5745.

Robertson Petroleum golf tourney boosts 4-H Foundation

At the first Robertson Petroleum 4-H Charity Golf Classic, held on June 27, 2001 at the Beaver Dam Golf Course near Madden, 55 golfers helped raise $5,170 for the 4-H Foundation's Millennium Fund. "It was enthusiastically received, and everyone we talked to was happy with the turnout ," said Robertson Petroleum spokesman and event co-organizer Ed Kitt. Planning for the tournament started in April, after the idea of a golf tournament was suggested to the company by a 4-H Foundation Board member. The money raised will go toward the Foundation's Millennium Fund which assists all levels of 4-H by providing cash for a variety of 4-H activities, ranging from new clubs and programs to capital projects and exchanges. With the success of this year's tournament, it looks like the event will continue in years to come. Look for details on next year's tournament in a future edition of the 4-H Cloverleaf Quarterly.

Canadian Agri-Food awards of excellence

Agri-Food Canada and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair (RAWF) have launched five national awards to celebrate outstanding achievements in Canadian agriculture and agri-food. The Canadian Agri-Food Awards of Excellence will be given for innovation, environmental stewardship, export performance, agricultural awareness and education, and voluntarism. These new awards will honour the achievements of individuals, groups, organizations and businesses and their contributions to Canada's agri-food sector. Nominations for the awards will be accepted until September 14, 2001 and the awards will be presented on November 5, 2001 during the RAWF in Toronto. Selection criteria and nomination forms are available from the RAWF by calling (416) 263-3408. Information is also posted on the internet at <www.agr.gc.ca/ab_awards_e.phtml>.

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Agri-News

August 13, 2001

Diamondback moths an unusual pest

As canola crops mature, producers are getting more concerned about protecting their investment. This year with canola prices rising, there is significantly more interest in ensuring as many bushels as possible are harvested, so pest issues become more of a topic. The fact that an unfamiliar pest, the diamondback moth is present raises many questions with producers.

What is a diamondback moth? The adult is a small (1/3 inch) gray moth with a series of wavy, yellowish markings of their wings. When the wings are folded while the moth is at rest, these markings come together to form three yellow diamonds.

"It's not the moth that causes concern," says Jim Calpas, provincial integrated pest manager with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "It's the larvae from the eggs the adult lay that do the damage. The eggs are deposited on the leaf near the veins. When the larvae hatch, they immediately burrow into the leaves and start mining the tissue from inside. After about a week the larvae exit from the underside of the leaf. The larvae are small, clear to pale green worm like creatures that can be found initially on the leaves and eventually on the pods of canola plants. When disturbed, the larvae often wriggle vigorously. They may also hang from a thread if disturbed on a plant. Their scraping-type pod feeding causes yield loss in canola by removing the protecting surface tissue of the pods, preventing seed filling and increasing the risk of pod shatter."

Why do we have so many this year? This year was unusual in that we had very high numbers of diamondback moths carried on the winds blowing up from the southern states very early in the spring. As the entire life cycle of the diamondback moth is completed in as little as 21 and up to 50 days, there has been time for two or even three generations of diamondback moths to occur. Each female lays an average of 160 eggs during her adult lifespan of about 16 days.

How can producers check for diamondback moth larvae? Early in the growing season, it was possible to see clear 'windows' where immature larvae were feeding inside a leaf, leaving only a thin, clear layer of leaf surface. Eventually even this dead layer of leaf surface would give way, leading to a shot-hole appearance in leaves. This is an indication that producers should be checking their crops more seriously.

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"Ideally, to find out if you have the economic threshold of 200 to 300 diamondback per square meter, a producer should remove all the plants in that meter and beat them on a clean surface, counting the number of larvae present," adds Calpas. "That's a lot of larvae to count however, and producers have been picking out individual plants and following the same larval removal process, then multiplying the number found by their plant population in a square meter to determine if the economic threshold is met. For example, if a producer found an average of 4 larvae per plant and he has a plant population of 10 plants per square foot (roughly 100 plants per square meter), then he has four hundred larvae per square meter. This is well over the threshold if the crop is still in stage and the conditions are right. At least five sites in the field should be assessed."

When does diamondback moth larvae damage stop? Diamondback moth feeding on pods does not normally extend much beyond the middle of pod maturation. A hard tough pod that cannot easily be scraped away by a fingernail won't likely be seriously damaged by larvae. To determine if control measures are necessary, a producer should determine average maturity throughout the field. If the average crop maturity is passed the risky stage, control measures may not be necessary.

Will weather conditions help reduce diamondback moth larvae populations? Cool, windy conditions reduce adult activity, and females often die before they lay all their eggs. Heavy rainfall can drown small larvae and reduce numbers by more than half. Humid conditions within the crop can enhance the spread of fatal fungal diseases throughout the diamondback moth population. Checking populations after rain events may change control decisions.

What can we do about diamondback moths in our canola this year? "Producers should be regularly scouting for threshold numbers and intervening if the numbers and the crop maturity tell them to so," advises Calpas. "It is also important to determine the stage of the insect and where they are located on the plant when deciding to spray is warranted. If the majority of the larvae are in the late stages of development, fourth instar larvae (1/2 inch long) or pupae, then a spray will not be required as most of the damage has been done by this point. If all the larvae are confined to the lower leaves and the canola is filling the pods, again, a spray may not be required. If the larvae are feeding on the pods and the number exceed the threshold, a spray will likely be required."

Producers are encouraged to contact their crop specialist for informatin regarding the decision to spray. They should also be advising their neighbours in advance of applying an insecticide.

Contact: Jim Calpas
(780) 422-4911

Seed treatments necessary for pulse crops

Seed treatments are vital to restrain disease spread, to maximize seedling establishment, and improve pulse crop yield. Pulse seed is generally expensive and seed treatments allow producers to achieve target seedling populations while minimizing seeding costs.

"Pulse crops are becoming more and more popular with producers in the province," says Kan-Fa Chang, plant pathologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "More than 200 growers, marketing managers, crop specialists and researchers toured experimental plots of the plant pathology program at the CDCS this summer in conjunction with a series of seed treatment field days cosponsored by Syngenta Crop Protection Canada, Inc. and Alberta Agriculture. Field trials featured seed treatments on lentil, chickpea, pea, dry bean and soybean using Apron Maxx, Vitaflo, and other fungicides to control pythium, fusarium and rhizoctonia root rot diseases. Despite extremely dry soil conditions in the spring, all plots sown with fungicide-treated seed produced significantly more seedlings than untreated plots. Visitors could easily see the effectiveness of the seed treatments."

Because of high chickpea seed prices in 2000, chickpea acreage has expanded in southern Alberta (mostly in Census Divisions 1, 2, 4 and 5) from 50,000 acres in 2000 to 90,000 acres in 2001. Disease surveys conducted in commercial pea and chickpea fields this summer have shown that root rot commonly occurs in both crops.

"The CDCS tours included cultivar screening trials for root rot resistance in chickpea, but none of the seven cultivars tested were resistant to the disease since few seedlings emerged from plots inoculated with Rhizoctonia solani," adds Chang. "The disease was more prevalent in Kabuli chickpeas than in the Desi type. Ascochyta blight also appeared in many chickpea fields surveyed by CDCS staff this summer. Although both diseases occurred in most of the fields examined, they did not affect a great numbers of plants. Since chickpea cultivation is new to southern Alberta, the diseases associated with it have not had time to become widely established. Also, farmers have applied foliar sprays, such as Bravo and Quadris, to prevent ascochyta from spreading through their chickpea crops."

Apron, Captan, Crown, Thiram, and Vitaflo are currently registered as seed treatments to control seedling blight in pulse crops. Many diseases are introduced into new areas through naturally infected seeds, so seed treatments restrict the spread of these disease organisms. These products also delay seed-borne diseases such as ascochyta blight, a devastating disease that can completely destroy a chickpea

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crop within two weeks. Under conditions favourable for disease development, ascochyta can also become a major limiting factor in field pea production in central Alberta.

To be the most effective, seed treatments should be used in conjunction with good farming practices, such as crop rotation and the use of clean, disease-free seeds to start the crop. Seed should be tested for possible contamination by pathogens before planting, and a three- to four-year interval should be maintained between successive pulse crops.

Contact:	*Kan-Fa Chang*	*Shelley Barkley*
	(403) 362-1334	*(403) 362-1305*

Alberta beef sizzles in Mexico

Alberta's beef exports to Mexico have taken off since 1998. Year 2000 exports show that Mexico is the second largest export market for Alberta's beef for the first time; the U.S. being the largest market. Beef accounted for about 45 per cent of Alberta's agri-food exports to Mexico in 2000, up from 25 per cent of the 1999 exports.

"Duties had been imposed on most U.S. exports of beef carcasses and cuts based on the decision made in April 2000. This made it an opportune time for Alberta exporters to strengthen their reputation in the market," says Marcia O'Connor, with Alberta Economic Development's agriculture and food branch, Edmonton. "Canada's exports continue to grow even though the impact of these duties are not major deterrents for U.S. suppliers at this point."

The Canada Beef Export Federation (CBEF) has made valuable inroads in marketing Canada's beef in Mexico. In December 2000, Sr. Angel Celis, a new General Manager was appointed to the CBEF office in Monterrey. Ted Haney, president of CBEF, says, "Mexican importers, distributors and consumers appreciate our high yielding grain-fed beef and our industry's flexibility and dedication to service. The small transportation cost disadvantages we face when compared to our American competitors are more than offset by market premiums, which are as high as 20 per cent."

Local representation is the key. Exports only began to rise after CBEF opened its Monterrey office in January 1997. Knowledge, awareness, image and trade contacts have all been improved, with CBEF serving as a focal point for buyers and sellers alike.

"In May 2001, there were signs that the government was about to limit the import of meat and live animals to specific ports and points of entry," adds O'Connor. "This was a result of pressure from the Mexican cattle and hog producers wanting to establish a barrier to potential carriers of Foot and Mouth Disease. These restrictions were not implemented and it looks like they won't be in the foreseeable future."

When looking at quantity, Alberta's beef exports grew from 3.5 thousand tonnes in 1998 to over 37,000 tonnes in 2000. The largest growth was in fresh or chilled boneless cuts. In 2000 ($123,236,000) Alberta's beef exports to Mexico more than tripled the values in 1999 ($40,319,000) and the first quarter of 2001 was about 200 per cent higher than the first quarter of 2001. Exports of Alberta beef are predicted to reach over $300 million by 2010.

Contact: *Marcia O'Connor*
(780) 422-1762

4-H'ers to attend United Nations seminar

When most Alberta 4-H'ers are out at livestock shows and summer camps, Katrina Hansen of Three Hills and Alix de Beaudrap of Trochu will be discussing international policy and human rights.

Hansen and de Beaudrap are the two Alberta 4-H members chosen to attend the seminar on the United Nations and International Affairs being held at the Goldeye Centre near Nordegg on August 19 to 24, 2001. Sponsored by the Calgary Exhibition and Stampede, the pair will join close to 130 other young Albertans in debates and sessions focusing on the political, economic and social dynamics of international affairs.

De Beaudrap, a member of both the Huxley 4-H Beef club and the Trochu Valley 4-H Riders, says she's looking forward to the experience. She will play the part of a Syrian diplomat during a mock debate on the UN's sanctions against Iraq, and that will require some work before hand. "I think I'm going to have to do some research," she says "This program should be quite a learning experience."

With many of the sessions lead by diplomats from the United Nations and from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Hansen, a member of the Three Hills 4-H Mulit-club, also expects to become better versed in the intricacies of international relations at this program. "I'm interested in human rights, and want a stronger background in that area. Plus, I love debating, so I'm expecting to expand in these areas," he says.

These two delegates, more accustomed to 4-H camps where the majority of participants come from rural backgrounds, will find the UN seminar a change of pace, as most of the delegates will have an urban upbringing. But this doesn't bother them for a minute. "I'm always sort of nervous going to any camp, but it is going to be neat meeting all the different people. There's going to be a lot of variety," says de Beaudrap.

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De Beaudrap and Hansen were chosen to take part in the UN seminar after attending the Alberta 4-H Selections program in April of this year. Selections, a four-day gathering of the top 4-H'ers in the province, awards educational trips to the 60 most outstanding Alberta 4-H members each year. Other Selections trips include inter-provincial exchanges, participation in national 4-H events in Toronto and Ottawa, as well as visits to 4-H programs in Montana and California.

For more information or to join 4-H call 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta through the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H website at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact:	*Maguerite Stark*	*Betty Gurdnizki*
	(403) 948-8510	*(780) 427-4499*

4-H'ers to view northern agricultural diversity

Edmonton to Yellowknife trip highlights industry, history and culture of the north

Spending 10 days riding a bus and camping in northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories may not be everyone's ideal summer vacation, but Anna Rutledge of Wainwright is looking forward to it.

"I'll be with some really neat people and I think this will be quite a learning experience," she said. From August 20 to 30, Rutledge and 25 other members of Alberta 4-H will travel from Edmonton to Yellowknife as part of the 4-H Alberta/Northwest Territories Agriculture Development Tour, which introduces delegates from across the province to the agricultural practices found in the north. Stops will include bison farms, seed cleaning plants, and bee farms, as well as historical and cultural sites such as museums and dog sled kennels. The experience promises to be eye-opening for many of the participants.

"I've never been north of Edmonton, so it should be interesting, learning about a different way of life up there," said Dustin Wasdal of Endiang.

Participants were given the opportunity to go on this trip after taking part in the Alberta 4-H Selections program this past spring. Every year, Selections awards educational trips and exchanges to approximately 60 of the most deserving 4-H members in the province. As well as the Alberta/Northwest Territories Agriculture Development Tour, delegates are also offered the chance to take part in 4-H seminars in Toronto, Ottawa, Montana and California, and to participate in exchanges with 4-H'ers in Atlantic Canada, Ontario and Quebec.

For more information on 4-H, or to join the program, please call 444-4H4H (toll free through the RITE line at 310-0000), or visit our website at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Marguerite Stark* *(403) 948-8510*

AVAC unveils unique seed funding program for value-added agriculture

Idea Builder focuses on smaller deals, faster approvals

A new seed funding program was announced by AVAC Ltd. on June 26, 2001. The program is designed to assist entrepreneurs and others pursuing value-added agriculture in Alberta. The ***Idea Builder*** program offers matching project capital up to $25,000 for projects involving agrivalue, such as new food and health products, marketing innovations and breakthroughs in food processing technologies.

"This is a unique addition to AVAC's capabilities," says Keith Jones, AVAC president and CEO. "Idea Builder provides a faster review and approval process for smaller proposals. We expect to see some great ideas come forward that can really benefit from seed capital."

Idea Builder's simplified approval process involves three steps: review of the application, a face-to-face meeting, and disbursement. AVAC expects the turnaround time for each proposal will be no more than four weeks.

Joyce Lencucha, agri food development specialist, Red Deer, and Tim Keating, rural development specialist-business, Falher, are currently on secondment to AVAC Ltd. As new venture development officers and are assisting with the launch of this program.

"Idea Builder was designed specifically to help early-stage ideas move a step closer to commercialization," says Joyce Lencucha, agri-food development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, who has recently been seconded to AVAC for a two-year term. "This could include crafting a comprehensive business and marketing plan, obtaining industry expertise, exploring market opportunities, and generally giving great ideas the lift they need to take flight. Successful applicants may later qualify for larger amounts through other AVAC programs."

For small-scale entrepreneurs, Idea Builder provides streamlined access to AVAC's investment and mentoring services. All proposals submitted must also meet AVAC's investment criteria:

- be an innovative early-stage idea
- add value-added agriculture in Alberta
- fit one of AVAC's four focus areas: new and enhanced foods; wellness products, such as nutraceuticals; industrial or non-food applications, such as cosmetics or animal feeds; new technologies that enable value-added agriculture.

Application forms can be accessed quickly and conveniently through AVAC's web site. Applicants can go on-line at <www.avacltd.com> to download the Idea Builder form and submit it via-e-mail, fax or mail to AVAC.

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"On December 13, 1996, Alberta Agriculture Minister Walter Pazkowski announced that the province of Alberta was investing $35 million in the creation of an Alberta value-added corporation to foster accelerated growth of value-added agriculture," explains Jones. "An additional $10 million was contributed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada under a unique Canada-Alberta funding agreement. AVAC Ltd. was then established as an independent, not-for-profit corporation with the support of these public funds."

AVAC Ltd. is a not-for-profit private company that facilitates the link to knowledge and investment with science and enterprise to help grow Alberta's value-added agriculture industry. AVAC was created in 1997. To date, AVAC has committed over $12 million dollars to agrivalue initiatives.

For further information, contact: Corey Keith or Ross Bricker, senior investment managers, AVAC, Suite 220, 6815 - 8th St. N.E. Calgary, Alberta. T2E 7H7, phone (403) 274-2774; fax (403) 274-0101; or contact Lencucha or Keating, new venture development officers, at (403) 314-4100; e-mail <details@avacltd.com>; web site address <www.avacltd.com>.

Contact:	*Joyce Lencucha*	*Tim Keating*
	(403) 314-4100	*(403) 314-4100*

Agri-News Briefs

Alberta Ag staff seconded to AVAC

Joyce Lencucha and Tim Keating of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development have been seconded to the AVAC Ltd. for two years. Lencucha has been involved in a variety of positions and projects, working first as a district home economist, then a regional home economist and most recently as an agrifood development specialist. She has been providing information to and coaching new and emerging agrifood processing companies in Central and North Eastern Alberta. Keating, who has degrees in economic and regional and urban development from the University of Saskatchewan and a certificate in planning has assisted farmers and rural communities with agribusiness development in Saskatchewan and more recently has been working as a rural development specialist - business for Alberta's Peace Region. This secondment opportunity is a collaborative arrangement between Alberta Agriculture and AVAC Ltd. to provide this organization with experienced staff who have a knowledge of the agri food industry. It will also provide Alberta Agriculture with a closer link to these organizations. Lencucha and Keating will assist with the launch of AVAC's new ***Idea Builder*** program. This program will help agrivalue entrepreneurs by providing streamlined access to capital to develop their ideas. AVAC's Idea Builder program can provide up to $25,000 in matching project capital for ideas that add value to agricultural commodities. Projectsmay include ideas such as new food and health products, marketing innovations and breakthrougs in food processing technologies. For further information contact Lencucha or Keating at (403) 314-4100, Red Deer.

The GALAS

Growing Alberta is accepting nominations for this year's ***Growing Alberta Leadership Awards***. The GALAS are designed to honour individuals and/or private and public sector organizations that have demonstrated innovation and leadership by advancing Alberta's agriculture and food industry. The GALAS are presented annually at the Growing Alberta Harvest Gala celebration held during Agriculture and Food week each fall. Nominations will be accepted in four categories: Food Safety; Nutrition, Food Quality and Life Sciences; Environment; and, Economic or Market Development. Nominations are also invited for individuals or organizations for the ***Growing Alberta Distinguished Service Award***. All nominations must be received before 4:30 p.m. on September 4, 2001. Nominations can be mailed to Kristina Dembinski, Growing Alberta, Suite 402, 1101-5 Street, Nisku, AB T9E 7N3. For further information, award criteria and nomination forms, contact Kristina at (780) 955-3714 or by e-mail <kristina.dembinski@growingalberta.com>.

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Agri-News

August 20, 2001

Local research trials to visit this summer

A considerable amount of on farm research is conducted every year, but many local farmers may not be even aware of it. Local or regional information is something farmers are always seeking. While touring research stations, farmers often comment that while research looks great, they wonder if the same treatment response would be seen on their farm. This is a legitimate question. Environmental conditions (precipitation, day length, frost-free days, soil types) vary dramatically throughout the province and even within regions and districts. Farmers want to see treatments work under the conditions that their farms experience. "On Farm Demonstration (OFD) is a program where funds may be accessed to set up research trials on farm," says Mark Olson, pulse and special crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "Set up primarily as a demonstration program, OFD has evolved to where much of the work now requires a research design incorporated into it. After all, once farmers see how tall something is, how early or late it is, or how plump a kernel, then the next question is whether the yields between treatments significantly different. Proper scientific design enables researchers and extension staff to tell a farmer with a 95 per cent confidence level that the treatments are different and that they will see the differences on their farm."

Have you visited a on farm research trial lately ? Funding for on farm research will only continue if farmers make use of and support it.

Examples of projects in the pulse and special crops subject areas funded by OFD, that I am coordinating in conjunction with numerous other partners in Central Alberta are;

- Micronutrients on Field Peas – Camrose and Carstairs;
- Special Purpose Field Peas – Carstairs and Lacombe;
- Pulse Crop Diversification Trials – Rockyford and Stettler; and,
- Regional Field Pea Variety Trials – Lacombe, Rockyford and Three hills.

"Field trials and research stations can be found in many areas of the province, and their numbers continue to grow," adds Olson. "A recent hailstorm in Lacombe, both at the Alberta Agriculture and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research stations, clearly demonstrated the need to spread research trials around. Having the trials too close together can result in

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a major loss on those occasions when Mother Nature is less than a benevolent parent."

All research sites are well signed and guided or self-guided tours are encouraged. Any farmers wanting more information on the pulse and special crops trials in their area, are welcome to call Olson or Greg Armson, pulse and special crops technician at (403) 782-3301.

The latest issue of ***Pulse Crops News*** has research trial locations and directions to the sites. Call Janette McDonald, general manager, Alberta Pulse Growers Commission at (780) 986-9398 for a copy.

Contact: Mark Olson
(403) 782-3301

Problem Wildlife Training seminar

The 30th annual Provincial Problem Wildlife Training seminar, is being held on September 18, 2001 at Camp Wohelo, Pigeon Lake.

"The purpose of the seminar is to train and inform our partners, rural municipalities and other stakeholders, including the livestock industry, about Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's animal damage control programs," says John Bourne, vertebrate pest specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Vermilion. "Topics covered at the seminar will include management or control of coyote predation, rats, rabies, field rodents and other agricultural vertebrate nuisances."

The seminar has received national recognition, and often attended by representatives from other provinces or jurisdictions experiencing similar wildlife-agricultural conflicts. The seminar provides up-to-date information, appropriate resources and program guidance to assist in the management of agriculture pests.

"The seminar usually brings in national and international special guest speakers who are experts in the field of research and development in animal damage control," adds Bourne. "Being held at a fairly remote, outdoor camp facility, within an hour of Edmonton, attendees have a chance to closely associate with each other and discuss their individual and common pest problems."

For further information or to register, contact Bourne in Vermilion at (780) 853-8225, e-mail <john.bourne@gov.ab.ca> or David Brennan in Barrhead at (780) 674-8256, e-mail <dave.brennan@gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: John Bourne *David Brennan*
(780) 853-8225 *(780) 674-8256*

Help eradicate purple loosestrife

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) is a tall woody perennial plant that has invaded wetlands across North America. The plant produces 2.5 million seeds a year and can quickly out-compete native vegetation. Purple loosestrife infestation leads to the loss of both plant and animal diversity.

"Alberta has zero tolerance for purple loosestrife, which is classified as a noxious weed under the Alberta Weed Control Act," says Janet Feddes-Calpas, provincial coordinator for the Purple Loosestrife Eradication Program with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "This decision was made by the Purple Loosestrife Management Committee, after assessing the plant's aggressive nature. This predator is characterized by square, woody stalks, smooth tongue-like leaves, and long pink/purple flower spikes. New infested areas are often located downstream from urban centuries indicating that seeds are being carried by natural waterways, irrigation canals and storm sewer outlets."

This beautiful plant was first introduced to North America from Europe during the early 1800's and was once sold by horticulturists as a perennial. Garden varieties of Lythrum were thought to be sterile. Research has proven that under the right conditions these plants can cross-pollinate with escaped plants to produce viable seeds themselves. For this reason the Purple Loosestrife Plant Exchange Program was put in place to encourage homeowners to remove all Lythrum varieties from their gardens. Homeowners can bring the whole plant, including the root of any Lythrum variety, to participating greenhouses in exchange for an alternate four-inch perennial at no cost or discount.

"Under the leadership of Alberta Agriculture, with the assistance of several stake holder groups and many volunteers, the Purple Loosestrife Eradication Program has been addressing the eradication of purple loosestrife," adds Feddes-Calpas. "At this time, Alberta's infestations are small compared with other provinces and we need the public's help to reduce the numbers of sites and the spread of this plant."

Public assistance in the program can include learning how to identify purple loosestrife. If purple loosestrife is found, hand pulling or digging is the most effective method for eradication. Be sure to dig up the entire plant including the roots and place it in black garbage bags. Do not compost! Dispose of the plants by burning or by burial in a land fill sites.

"Known purple loosestrife sites need to be checked annually," says Feddes-Calpas. "Report any sightings to the local weed inspector, agricultural fieldman or call the provincial hotline at (780) 422-7199. This number is toll free by using the RITE number 310-0000 and then dialing the number."

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Organized *Purple Plant Pulls* are the most effective method to combat purple loosestrife in aquatic trouble spots. To get involved, keep your eye out for advertisements asking for volunteers and come out and help.

To obtain a listing of participating greenhouses and garden centres in the Plant Exchange Program or for more information, check out Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/pests/weeds>.

Contact: *Janet Feddes-Calpas*
(780) 422-7199

Growing for Tomorrow

Representatives of Landscape Alberta Nursery Trades Association (LANTA), the Alberta Market Gardeners Association (AMGA), the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA), the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) and the Flower and Herb Producers (FHP) are working hard lining up an exciting group of speakers for the 2001 Alberta Horticultural Congress.

The 2001 Hort Congress is being held on November 8 to 10 at the Mayfield Inn and Suites, Edmonton. This year's theme is ***Growing for Tomorrow***.

"There will be a microscope session on identifying vegetable and some fruit pests on November 8 for the Market Gardeners and another on bush fruit insects conducted by Dr. Ken Fry for the Fruit Growers Society on November 9," says Shirley Alton, Congress coordinator. "Dr. Ken Fry will also be conducting an insect workshop on November 10 for the Alberta Greenhouse Growers. It will be a hands-on workshop with microscopes and manuals provided. These sessions are invaluable in educating growers about how to cut their crop losses."

Members of LANTA, AMGA, AGGA, FGSA and FHP will receive programs in the mail. Any commercial producer not a member of one of these associations who would like to attend the Congress, should call (780) 415-2324 and leave their name, company, address and phone number, and they will be mailed a program and registration package.

Contact: *Shirley Alton*
(780) 415-2324
e-mail: salton1@telusplanet.net

Alberta 4-H members visit eastern Canada

Bonnyville, Daysland, Airdrie, Sedalia & Vulcan youths take part in Interprovincial Exchange

Nineteen-year-old Leanne Grenier of Airdrie learned how to milk a cow this summer, but she had to go all the way to Ontario to do it.

Grenier was one of several Alberta 4-H'ers to experience the diversity of Canada by taking part in a 4-H Interprovincial Exchange program this summer. Thanks to sponsorship from the Royal Bank of Canada, Grenier along with Avery Murphy of Bonnyville, Debbie Zimmer of Daysland, Shaina Wagstaff of Sedalia, and Richelle Flitton of Vulcan, spent July 3 to 17 with families in eastern and Atlantic Canada, seeing the sights and getting their hands dirty in a variety of activities.

"I thought it was a wonderful trip. It was my first time there," Grenier says of her stays on farms near Westmeath and Copetown, both towns in Renfrew County in southern Ontario. "I stayed at a couple of dairy farms and learned how to milk a cow. It was all new to me. I also got to show a Jersey heifer, which is quite different from showing a beef animal."

In addition to showing dairy animals, Grenier visited the Ontario legislature and explored caves in her host province.

Zimmer, 19, says her trip to New Brunswick was unforgettable, despite some rain on the host farms near Bathurst in the northern part of the province and Sackville near the Nova Scotia border. "The first week I was there, it rained almost every day," she explains. "I helped out on both farms I stayed at and went to the Acadian Historical Village. I also went to a 4-H camp there that was all francophone, and I don't speak French." Thanks to some translating by her host family, Zimmer got along fine at the camp and was also able to squeeze in some sightseeing during her trip. "There are a lot of covered bridges there. It is very picturesque, and I love the ocean, so it was great."

Seventeen-year-old Wagstaff found her trip to Nova Scotia enjoyable both because of the landscape and the people. "There are a lot more trees there, and it is far more humid.

The people were really friendly. They would stop you on the street and talk to you. They always wanted to know what it's like here in Alberta." Wagastaff, a member of the East Sounding Creek 4-H Beef club, says her stays near Middleton and Debert included numerous activities she won't forget. "It was awesome. I saw Peggy's Cove, the Bay of Fundy, and I also went clam digging, kayaking and sailing."

Cont'd on page 4

Prince Edward Island was a bit of a surprise for 17-year-old Flitton. "When I went there, I was expecting sweeping meadows, but it was actually a lot like my grandma's place near Turner Valley, but with red soil. And there were trees everywhere." During her stays with host families near South Freetown and Vernon River, she saw a musical adaptation of Lucy Maude Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* story, as well as the Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum. "I had really good seafood while I was there," she says. To her surprise, the island was bigger, and its cities smaller, than she expected. "I knew the island was small, however, when I got there it seemed bigger, but the cites were really small. Vernon River was no more than 10 houses, and all the buildings were older-looking. There were a lot of tiny villages everywhere."

Avery Murphy of Bonnyville also took part in the Interprovincial Exchange by visiting Quebec, but has been unavailable for comment since returning to Alberta. These 4-H members were chosen to take part in the Interprovincial Exchange after they attended the 4-H Selections program in April of this year. Selections is a four-day meeting of the province's top 4-H'ers and is held each year at Olds College. At the end of the program, approximately 60 delegates are offered the opportunity to take part in a variety of educational trips and exchanges, ranging national seminars in Ottawa and Toronto, to trips to Montana and California.

For more information on 4-H or to join, call 422-4H4H (toll-free in Alberta by dialing the RITE line at 310-0000), or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Marguerite Stark*
Provincial 4-H Programs Specialist
(403) 948-8510

Agri-News Briefs

Advisory from Alberta Farm Implement Act Administration

Alta Terra Ventures Corp. has terminated business as the distributor for the "TAFE" tractor. Statutory warranty, as provided by the *Alberta Farm Implement Act*, will expire shortly. Any statutory warranty concerns that have not been addressed by ALTA Terra Ventures Corp. should be registered with the Alberta Farm Implement Act Administration office at #305, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or phone (780) 427-2188. Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first. For further information, contact Dennis Budney (780) 427-2188 or Bernie Yakimyshyn (780) 427-2729. ***Note***: parts are now available at Shortline Spraying & Equipment Ltd. Box 728, 23 Service Road Hwy #8, Redvers, SK, S0C 2H0, or contact Randy by phone at (306) 452-6437, fax (306) 452-6096, e-mail <shortlinespraying@hotmail.com>.

Advisory from Alberta Farm Implement Act Administration

F1rst Equipment Centre Inc., with multiple Case IH dealerships, entered into receivership on August 23, 2000. Statutory warranty, as provided by the *Alberta Farm Implement Act*, will expire shortly. Any statutory warranty concerns or lack of retail agreement fulfillment not addressed by F1rst Equipment Centre Inc. should be registered with the Alberta Farm Implement Act Administration office at #305, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or phone (780) 427-2188. Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first. For further information, contact Dennis Budney (780) 427-2188 or Bernie Yakimyshyn (780) 427-2729.

Advisory from Alberta Farm Implement Act Administration

Gilles Gregoire et Fils Inc. (Gregson Sprayer Specialist) manufacturers of the *Maverick* high clearance sprayer, entered into receivership earlier this year. Statutory warranty, as provided by the *Alberta Farm Implement Act*, will expire shortly. Any statutory warranty concerns or lack of retail agreement fulfillment not addressed by "Gregson" should be registered with the Alberta Farm Implement Act Administration office at #305, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or phone (780) 427-2188. Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first. Fortunately, Gregson has been purchased and repair parts are available. For further information, contact Dennis Budney (780) 427-2188 or Bernie Yakimyshyn (780) 427-2729.

Advisory from Alberta Farm Implement Act Administration

Walton's Farm Equipment Sales Ltd, entered into receivership on January 24, 2001. Statutory warranty, as provided by the *Alberta Farm Implement Act*, will expire shortly. Any statutory warranty concerns or lack of retail agreement fulfillment not addressed by Walton's Farm Equipment Sales Ltd. should be registered with the Alberta Farm Implement Act Administration office at #305, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or phone (780) 427-2188. Government numbers are toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 first. For further information, contact Dennis Budney (780) 427-2188 or Bernie Yakimyshyn (780) 427-2729.

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Agri-News

August 27, 2001

Carbadox banned

Health Canada has asked manufacturers to stop the sale of Carbadox, effectively immediately.

"Carbadox is a veterinary antibiotic licensed for use in young swine by Health Canada and several other countries," says Michelle Follensbee, technology transfer specialist (pork) with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Carbadox, also commonly known by one of its brand names – Mecadox, is used in some pigs only up to 35 kilograms to help overcome production loss due to the stress associated with weaning, castration and handling. It is also used to prevent and control swine dysentery in pigs under 45 kilograms. Carbadox was approved on the basis that it would be withdrawn from the feed of the animals 35-days prior to slaughter. A veterinary prescription is not required for Carbadox."

Carbadox has been under review by Health Canada over the past year in response to the European Union audit of the Canada Program for the Control of Residues. Studies have shown that Carbadox, and the by-products of the drug that occur when the drug is metabolized in the body of rats, can cause cancer in rats. These studies, reports of accidental contamination, issues surrounding Carbadox residue testing, health concerns related to handling the product, and criticism from European officials has prompted Health Canada to stop the sale of Carbadox effective immediately. The use of Carbadox is banned in the European Union.

"When the product is used properly there is no evidence of a risk to human health," says Follensbee. "Studies have shown that when the 35-day withdrawal period is observed, the drug and the by-products created through metabolism are not found in meat products from treated animals."

Consumers should also keep in mind that the majority of pigs are not treated with Carbadox. The product is used under specific conditions and is only approved for use in young pigs. Alberta swine veterinarians and nutritionists estimate that less than 25 per cent of young pigs (up to 45 kg) in Alberta are treated with Carbadox. When used properly and Carbadox is withdrawn when the pigs are 45 kilograms, there is more than sufficient time to adhere to the 35-day withdrawal by the time the pigs reach the usual slaughter weight of 110 kilograms. Health Canada regularly conducts random tests of Canadian pork for the presence of Carbadox residues and no residues have been detected in the past several years.

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This Week

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"Given the concerns over this particular product and the general concern regarding antibiotic use in livestock production, pork producers, veterinarians and the animal feeding industry have already been working to emphasize management practices that will reduce antibiotic use and to develop antibiotic-free diets," adds Follensbee. "In addition, the Canadian hog industry has an on-farm food safety program, Canadian Quality Assurance CQA™, that addresses prudent use of veterinary drugs. Antibiotics, used properly, are valuable in animal production because they help improve livestock health by reducing the incidence of disease and suffering. Although the livestock industry is working to reduce human health concerns related to antibiotic use in livestock, they expect regulations to be based on sound technical information and that effective and safe alternatives be available."

More information is available on the internet at the following web sites

- MIB – http://inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/feebet/mib/mib53e.shtml
- CPC - http://www.cpc-ccp.com/release.html
- Health Canada – http://media.health-canada.net
- Rat report – http://fda.gov/cvm/efoi/section1/041061s013098.htm
- The Pig Site – http://www.thepigsite.com/featuredarticle

Producers should know that there are alternative products that can be substituted for Carbadox. Some may not be as effective in specific situations. For more information on substitute products, producers should contact their veterinarian or nutritionist.

Contact: Michelle Follensbee
Technology transfer specialist (pork)
(780) 415-0828

Dr. Julia Keenliside
Provincial swine veterinarian
(780) 427-4614

Dr. Gerald Ollis
Chief provincial veterinarian
(780) 427-6406

Fred Schuld
Head of pork programs
(780) 427-4592

Rye – can't get enough of it!

There is a demand for rye, and it's right here in Alberta. This year, Alberta Distillers Ltd. (ADL) has gone back to trying to purchase directly from producers. The company feels that if it can reestablish the connection with the farming community, it can convince Alberta farmers that rye is a worthwhile crop to grow.

"The constantly changing business environment requires companies to react appropriately to remain competitive," says Jim Rogerson, director of operations with ADL. "A return to the direct in-house purchasing of our grain requirements matches our corporate needs within this new environment. Rebuilding the company's relationship with growers can be a win/win environment."

ADL uses Canadian Grain Commission #2 Canadian Western Rye specifications. The company does not require a falling number, all they ask for is that the grain meet CGC specs and be free of any odours. The normal ergot specs of #2 CW rye apply. The company is not variety specific.

ADL needs over 40,000 tons of grain a year for normal production. In lean years, they also use triticale, a cross bred grain from wheat and rye. The specs for triticale is also a CGC #2 CW triticale.

The rye whisky making process is quite complex and time consuming. The rye grain is first selected and received into grain silos. It then goes through a process of grinding, cooking, fermentation and distilling. There are many steps involved, all playing a role in the conversion of starch to sugar to alcohol. Once distilled, the whisky is transferred to white oak barrels that have been charred on the inside for maturing. Aging in wood mellows the flavours and provides wood characteristics and colour. The whisky can remain in the casks, depending on the particular brand, from three to 10 years. Once the flavour has matured to its peak, the rye whisky is bottled. Only 20 per cent of the total production is bottled in Canada, the rest is sent out in bulk as Canadian Whisky to the U.S. and the rest of the world.

ADL is the only distiller in Western Canada that makes most of its whisky out of rye grain. The majority of Canadian rye whisky is generally made from corn, a little known fact. ADL was built in the heartland of the prairies because of the close proximity to abundant rye crops.

"Before the grain can even start being processed into whisky, rye has to be sourced from producers and that's getting harder all the time," says Jeff Kozak, grains manager with ADL, Calgary. "The production of rye continues to shrink every year. Twenty years ago, almost one million acres of rye was grown, that number has decreased to just over 200,000 acres of rye planted this year. With drought conditions in southern Alberta, this could be the lowest production in western Canada we've seen."

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"Several factors have caused low rye production numbers in the province," says Murray McLelland, provincial cereal crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "Canadian rye exports to Asia have shrunk considerably; the milling market demand has shrunk; and, there is less room to store rye in the space-limited concrete elevator facilities."

All these factors have resulted in a distiller that was built to handle rye that can no longer find enough of the crop they need. Most of the rye production has to be stored on-farm and marketed through other than the traditional channels. Rye producers have been known to sit on their crop for two to three years looking for a sale. Many of these producers don't realize that there is a market for their product right here, and ADL want to make sure producers find out about it.

"We hope that Alberta producers will enjoy the chance of being able to deal directly with ADL," adds Kozak. " I think they will find by dealing directly with the company that they can maximize their return on their rye or triticale crop."

Contact:	*Jeff Kozak*	*Murray McLelland*
	(403) 265-2541	*(403) 782-4641*

Livestock feeders – are you fusarium aware?

Livestock producers need to be aware of the risks of buying fusarium damaged grain.

Fusarium head blight (FHB) is an important cereal disease of the eastern Canadian prairies, eastern Canada, and the Midwest US, causing millions of dollars in losses each year. Over the last few years, the fungus Fusarium graminearum, the causal agent for FHB, has been moving westward. Current grain varieties have little to no resistance to fusarium, resulting in yield losses, lower grades, rejection of barley for malt status and hog feed, and a reduced quality of feed and food produced from infected grain. Alberta is functionally fusarium free and we need to keep it that way!

"Crop reports from Manitoba are seeing increased fusarium levels in many areas," says Dr. Ieuan Evans, plant pathologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Livestock feeders and feed grain traders, who are shipping in grain and feed from outside Alberta, may be putting Alberta crops at risk. The transporting of infected feed and seed is a contributing factor to the introduction and further spread of the fusarium agent in Alberta. Livestock feeders are encouraged to test all feed being brought into the province, especially if they are importing from areas with high FHB infection rates in order to safeguard the health of their stock."

The levels of this disease in Alberta are very low, consequently prevention is the best cure. There are steps farmers can take to reduce their risk of FHB. Farmers should contact their local Agriculture Service Board or contact AAFRD for more information. Information can also be found on the AAFRD website at www.agric.gov.ab.ca and the Canadian Grain Commission website at www.cgc.ca.

Or contact a veterinarian or Dr. Ieuan Evans at (780) 422-0719 or Lorraine Harrison, plant pathologists with Alberta Agriculture, (780) 354-5153.

Contact:	*Dr. Ieuan Evans*	*Lorraine Harrison*
	(780) 422-0719	*(780) 354-5153*

Forages that can follow the use of residual herbicides

"Some of the newer herbicides have the potential to cause injury to subsequently seeded forage crops as they leave a residue in the soil," says Dan Cole, weed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's agronomy unit, Edmonton. "Producers need to know when they can safely seed a forage crop after a residual herbicide has been used. Most producers already know the importance of keeping good records of where residual herbicides have been applied."

Crop specialist Calvin Yoder, weed scientist Dr. Jim Moyer and weed specialist Dan Cole are working with BASF Canada, Bayer and Monsanto Canada to determine some of this information.

"Two years of trials conducted at three locations in the province have shown that soil pH is a very important consideration when planting a grass into land treated with Pursuit or Odyssey," continues Cole. "There was far less damage at the sites with a pH of 8.0 and 7.0 than at the site with a pH of 5.5 when grasses were seeded the year after the Pursuit and Odyssey were sprayed."

Grasses and legumes were recently seeded into land at Lethbridge, Edmonton and Falher, where Everest and Sundance were sprayed in 2000. Another set of three trials are being sprayed with Everest and Sundance in 2001 to be seeded with three grasses and two legumes in 2002. Alberta Agriculture will publish this data in the KERNELS newsletter as soon as it is available. This research should provide answers to several important forage and cropping questions.

Contact: *Dan Cole*
(780) 422-0919

Pricing feeds

Cattlemen are looking for the best buy in feeds these days. One of the main reasons is that traditional feedstuffs are nearly double to triple the price they were last year. Many are looking for options and believe me there are lots of them. Some of these options won't be as easy as filling the round bale feeders as one would normally do, but with a little effort and pencil work, cow-calf producers can find the best option for their operations.

"Supplementing non-traditional forages like straws, chaff and greenfeeds to make them nutritionally sound will take some thinking," says Bill Grabowsky, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "One of the best ways is to use a software program developed by Alberta Agriculture called ***Cowbytes***. Nutritional information and prices can be added in and you can do some 'what if' scenarios."

If you do not have this software to use, simply compare protein and energy costs for example between two different grain supplements (on a dry matter basis). For example, if 12 per cent protein barley grain, with a TDN of 83 per cent, costs $3 per bushel, then the cost per pound of energy and protein will be 7.5 cents and 52 cents, respectively. If you compare barley to 11 per cent protein oat grain with a TDN of 76 per cent costing $2 per bushel, the cost per pound of energy and protein will be 7.7 cents and 53 cents. This example says that barley grain is the better buy. Nutrient levels can vary from grain to grain, so getting a feed analysis would confirm the energy and protein levels in your grains.

"Keeping track of the grain markets is key to getting the best deal," adds Grabowsky. "While some products may supply the necessary energy and protein at the least cost, some producers will be making a big mistake in not adequately supplementing the missing minerals and vitamins in the ration. A little common sense will go a long ways in meeting the needs of your cow herd this winter when dealing with non-traditional feedstuffs by comparing energy and protein costs."

There are some new products on the market as well that will help producers utilize lower quality feeds in the 40 to 45 per cent TDN range. NPN, slow release protein, supplements combined with a readily digestible energy source makes sense for those producers using fence-line grazing, stubble fields and sloughs. Search out many other options and decide which makes the most nutritional and economical sense for your own livestock.

Contact: Bill Grabowsky
(780) 361-1240

4-H Dairy Show worth the effort

Early mornings and hard work part of the experience for 4-H dairy club members

They may have been a little tired, but by the time the 55th annual Provincial 4-H Dairy Show wrapped up, the 65 Alberta 4-H'ers attending the event clearly felt that getting up before dawn and putting in a lot of hard work was worth the effort.

"We were here at 3:30 this morning, and yesterday it was 4 a.m. You don't get a lot of sleep at dairy shows, but you're always learning something, meeting new people and making friends," says 19-year-old Markus Hehli of Rimbey, a member of the Usona 4-H Dairy club. This year marked Hehli's seventh trip to the Provincial 4-H Dairy Show. Despite his years of experience and all he's learned at the show, Hehli and his fellow participants have to spend a lot of time preparing for the event. That preparation includes leading their animals on halters to familiarize them with show ring procedure, clipping and grooming them and keeping close track of their health. "You lead them all the time, feed them and make sure they're show-shape," he says. "The older you get, the better everyone else gets, so it's not any easier to get ahead. The competition is still right up there."

The show was held July 18 and 19 at the Westerner Exhibition Grounds in Red Deer. Participants began the event with the Dairy Bowl, a verbal test modeled after the quiz show Reach for the Top. They then demonstrated their practical knowledge by judging dairy cows and showing their own dairy projects for a professional judge in the Conformation competition.

Jessica Simanton of Ponoka, a member of the Lacombe 4-H Dairy club, agrees that members have to put in a lot of preparation before the show. "It's definitely worth all the work," she comments. "Most of us are from dairy farms and planning to be involved in agriculture when we grow up. You learn about judging and showing dairy animals at this show, and every year you're improving on these skills. And, of course, you get to show off your animals."

By the time it's all over, participants have a better understanding of what it takes to raise and show top-notch dairy animals, both through hands-on experience and by talking with dairy industry professionals who attend each year. These experiences prepare 4-H dairy club members to be leaders in the dairy field by allowing them to continuously build on their skills at each show. "You meet people in a friendly competition and face the challenge of trying to do better each year in each category," adds 19-year-old Jillian Chalack of Innisfail.

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The Provincial 4-H Dairy Show is supported by Gas Alberta Inc., along with the Alberta Dairy Industry and Alberta 4-H.

For more information on 4-H or to join the Alberta 4-H Program, please call 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta by dialing the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H website at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Jen Bishop
(780) 427-4462

Memorable time in Montana for Alberta 4-H'ers

Quartet of Alberta 4-H members take part in Montana 4-H State Congress

Squeezing six people into a mini-van and driving from Airdrie to Bozeman, Montana, may not be an ideal summer break for most people, but it suited a group of Alberta 4-H'ers just fine.

"It was a great trip. We had a really good group and our chaperones were excellent. Going down and coming back, we did a lot of tourist things, so that helped break the trip up," says Kim Hobbs of Czar. She was one of four Alberta 4-H members and two chaperones who traveled to Bozeman from July 9 to 14, 2001 for the Montana 4-H State Congress. Joining her were fellow 4-H members Kyle Cowan of Compeer, Lanny Anderson of Hughenden and Anita Lessner of Marwayne.

Attending the Montana State Congress highlighted some of the differences between Alberta and Montana 4-H programs, says 18-year-old Hobbs. "When they do something there, they go all out. They had a dance every night of the congress and the banquet was catered."

Eighteen-year-old Lessner was amazed at the sheer numbers of clubs some Montana 4-H'ers join. "I met some people who were in up to 20 different projects," she explains. While there were many projects that the Alberta group was familiar with, such as horse and beef clubs, as well as public speaking and sewing groups, they were surprised by some of the more diverse projects found in the Montana 4-H program. For example, participants at the congress attended sessions as varied as community gardening and world hunger, in addition to the more familiar cattle, horse, livestock judging and public speaking programs. "It was definitely a learning experience," adds Lessner.

The group also did some sightseeing on their way to and from the congress, with stops at the Lewis and Clark Caverns and West Glacier Park. "We also went white water rafting and had a lot of fun with that. I'm going to remember the touring and sight seeing we did," says Lessner.

The quartet was chosen to attend the Montana 4-H State Congress after taking part in the Alberta 4-H Selections program in April 2001. Selections is a four-day meeting of the province's top 4-H'ers, held each year at Olds College. At the end of the program, approximately 60 delegates are offered the opportunity to take part in a variety of educational trips and exchanges, ranging from visits to eastern Canada and national seminars in Ottawa and Toronto, to trips to Montana and California.

For more information on 4-H, or to join 4-H call (780) 422-4H4H, or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Marguerite Stark

(403) 948-8510

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Agri-News Briefs

Hort congress

Interested in establishing a fruit orchard? Interested in improving the fruit orchard you have? The Fruit Growers Society of Alberta can assist you with the line up of speakers for the Alberta Horticultural Congress in Edmonton, November 8 to 10, 2001. Topics of interest to fruit growers being covered at the Congress include: advertising your orchard on the FGSA; developing web pages; linking a site with the FGSA; propagation of native fruits with cuttings; pest identification with microscopes; research update for fruit growers; black currants; varieties of rhubarb from Washington to Sedgewick, Alberta; and, marketing to the food industry. Members of the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta will receive information about the Congress in the mail. If you do not belong to the association, contact Shirley Alton, Congress coordinator, and leave your name and address for the mailing list at (780) 415-2324 or e-mail <salton1@telusplanet.net >.

Agriculture web site helping the sale of forage

The Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development web site has a very good hay listing service that gets a lot of traffic. The site works to bring producers and purchasers together. Not only can producers post what type and quantity of hay they have for sale, but space is available where postings customer needs can be added to the information. The web address is <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/store/haylist.html>. Producers who would like to post a listing can use the on-line submission form located on the Alberta Agriculture site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/store/haylists.html>. New listings are added nearly every day. For further information, contact Alberta Agriculture's web site manager, Gerard Vaillancourt at (780) 422-6796.

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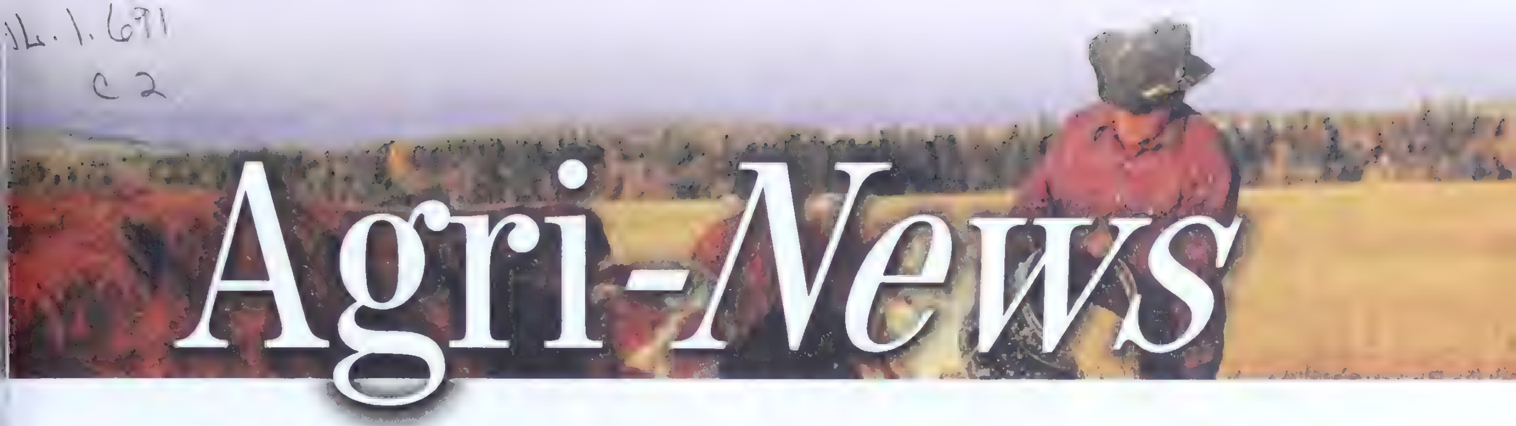

Agri-*News*

September 3, 2001

Monitoring helps agricultural industry protect water quality

Water quality is a priority for Alberta's agricultural industry. A provincial monitoring program is one of the many efforts in Alberta to help farmers and ranchers better protect water quality. A new information package highlighting the results of the 1999 monitoring program was released in August 2001.

The Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) Program has established a long-term water quality monitoring network of streams draining 23 small agricultural watersheds. This program, called the AESA Stream Survey, is tracking trends in water quality over time as the agriculture industry grows and more environmentally sustainable practices are adopted.

"Anything that happens on land – agriculture, forestry, and urbanization – can affect water quality," says Sandra Cooke, water quality specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Agriculture is doing its part to protect water quality. The AESA Stream Survey will help farmers and ranchers gauge whether they are maintaining or improving water quality in the agricultural areas of the province.

"Each year, a Provincial Overview will be issued to summarize the program's findings for the previous year. In addition, water quality information for each of the 23 watersheds will be summarized in annual Watershed Reports. There is also a series of factsheets and a brochure that outlines background information about the program."

The AESA Stream Survey monitors water quality by collecting stream samples that are analyzed for nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen; bacteria such as E. coli and fecal coliforms; and 40 pesticides, mostly herbicides. Samples are taken from March to October during high and low stream flows. Since water quality data tend to vary from year-to-year due to climatic variability, the purpose of this program is to monitor water quality over the long-term. "This long-term approach reflects the commitment of the agriculture industry to improve surface water quality in Alberta," says Cooke.

The data obtained so far is preliminary and doesn't yet provide enough information to establish trend lines. However, over the next few years of annual measuring, this information will allow the establishment of benchmarks that will enable the industry to chart progress.

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The AESA Stream Survey is sponsored and managed by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Environment, Alberta Health and Wellness, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (PFRA).

Other efforts to protect water quality in agricultural areas in Alberta include on-farm demonstration projects, publications and web documents on beneficial management practices (BMPs), and applied research on practices and standards. These efforts involve partnerships with agricultural commodity groups, municipalities, environmental agencies and others.

For a copy of the Information Package, contact the regional conservation coordinator at regional offices of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

For further information on the AESA Stream Survey, contact Cooke at (780) 427-3397.

Contact: Sandra Cooke
(780) 427-3397

Yardage – what does it cost?

Bringing a cow through the winter feeding period is the most expensive aspect of cow-calf production in Alberta. While this doesn't come as a surprise to producers, they may not realize that the actual cost is more than $2 per day.

"Winter feeding involves two costs – feed and yardage," says Jake Kotowich, production economist – livestock and forages with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Feed costs usually receive the lion's share of the attention. During the winter, producers focus on sourcing alternative feeds and determining which rations will work best for their herd. Yardage, on the other hand, is often ignored or poorly understood."

Because feed is the largest input cost during winter, cow-calf producers usually have a good handle on the dollars involved. Also, feed is a tangible input. It's fairly simple to calculate how many bales, bushels or pounds are put into the ration and multiply that amount by the unit price. Yardage is different. Although the costs are real, their indirect nature and complex calculations to arrive at an accurate figure often mean that many producers don't actually take the time to workout the costs for items such as fuel, repairs, utilities and labour and extrapolate that to a per head, per day basis.

"During the winter of 2000/2001, the economics unit of Alberta Agriculture conducted a detailed survey of several cow-calf producers in north-central Alberta," adds Kotowich. "As part of this ***Agri-Profit$*** cost and returns research project, a yardage cost profile for cow-calf operations in that region of the province was identified. The summary revealed the indirect nature of the cost of items included in yardage. Not all costs were actual cash costs and none of the inputs are used exclusively by cow-calf enterprises."

The following table illustrates the average yardage cost of 38 cow-calf producers, average herd size of 158 cows for the 2000 winter period. That average cost was $0.67/head/day. While cash costs were approximately $0.33, producers must keep in mind that they do have to pay themselves for their time and should account for depreciation. The cost of replacing equipment is very real and not something to let sneak up on you.

For the same time period, feed costs over $1.00/head/day. For this coming year, it wouldn't be unreasonable to calculate $1.25 to $1.40/head/day. These feed costs bring the total daily bill to $1.92 to $2.07/head.

"Operation managers can control their costs, but they can't manage when they don't know what those costs are," says Kotowich. "To calculate yardage costs, add up bills such as manure hauling, electricity, facility depreciation and the hours spent feeding with equipment. Divide these costs by the number of cows being wintered and that will give an idea of where yardage costs are sitting. Once yardage costs are understood and broken down, producers can start working on solutions to reduce them. Just knowing what your costs are won't make you more profitable, but it will focus your thoughts on the items that may require some attention."

When managing a multi-million dollar business, as many cattlemen do, knowing production costs is a basic first step. The math for calculating yardage may not be straight forward, so it may be worthwhile to invest in some software, such as Cow Profit$.

Program requirements to run the ***Cow Profit$*** software are:

- IBM or PC Compatible with a pentium processor
- Windows 95/98 or 2000
- SVGA graphics adaptor (or better)

More information about ***Cow Profit$*** and an on-line order form are available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowprofit$.html>.

Cost of the ***Cow Profit$*** software is $150 (plus GST) and can be ordered by phone by calling (780) 427-2404, or by mail by sending the request and a cheque or money order to:

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Home Study
#201, 7000 – 113 Street
Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6

Contact: Jake Kotowich
(780) 422-3086

Cont'd on page 3

2000 Cow-Calf Enterprise Yardage Costs

North-Central Alberta
Cows Wintered: 157.89
Observations: 38

	$/Cow Wintered	$/Head/Day
(A) Variable Costs:		
1. Fuel	13.67	0.07
2. Repairs - Machinery	12.46	0.06
3. Repairs - Buildings	10.24	0.05
4. Utilities (natural gas & electricity)	6.84	0.03
5. Custom Work	5.57	0.03
6. Operating Interest	8.13	0.04
7. Paid Labour & Benefits	2.16	0.01
8. Unpaid Labour	34.65	0.17
Total Variable Costs	**93.72**	**0.47**
(B) Capital Costs:		
1. Equip. & Bldg. a) Depreciation	33.08	0.17
b) Lease Payments	0.74	0.00
2. Capital Interest Paid	5.73	0.03
Total Capital Costs	**39.54**	**0.20**
(C) Total Cash Costs (A+B-A8-B1a)	**65.54**	**0.33**
(D) Total Production Costs (A+B)	**133.27**	**0.67**

Investment:	**$/cow wintered**
Buildings	255.54
Machinery	225.87
Total Investment	**481.41**

Labour Summary:	**hrs./day**
Grinding/Mixing Feed	0.13
Feeding & Bedding	2.11
Manure Disposal	0.08
Repairs & Maintenance	0.58
Total	**2.90**

Management:	
Days on Feed	199.84
Average Cow Size (lbs.)	1,333

140 hits for Daisy the detector Beagle

With the threat of foot-and-mouth disease still fresh in our minds, additional steps were taken to ensure no undeclared agricultural products would slip through Canada Customs in luggage from international flights. Those additional steps included bringing Daisy to Alberta. Daisy is a detector dog trained to sniff out agricultural products and help prevent pests and other harmful organisms prohibited by law from entering the country.

Daisy and her trainer/handler Mike Smith were stationed at the Calgary International Airport for flights arriving prior to Stampede Days and then came to Alberta's capital to do a tour of duty at the Edmonton International Airport in preparation for the World Track and Field Games.

Daisy works by meandering through luggage rack areas of the airport and, when she gets the scent of an agricultural product, she indicates the find by placing her paw on the piece of luggage. Once a piece of luggage has been 'indicated', the owner and the luggage are taken to a Customs area for a secondary inspection.

"Daisy performed beautifully," says Dr. Cornelia Kreplin, director of food safety with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "In Edmonton between July 26 and August 5, Daisy made 140 hits – or indications. Of that number, there were 100 intercepts where undeclared product was seized."

The 100 intercepts consisted of:

- meat – 26
- dairy – 10
- fruit – 60
- plants – 2
- dual (plant and animal) – 2

Residual scents from previous, consumed or disposed of materials can account for some of the discrepancy between the total number of hits and interceptions. It should also be noted that a significant amount of product, especially meats and cheeses, was dumped into washroom waste bins – no doubt as a direct result of in-coming passengers seeing Daisy at work. This was a likely cause of the secondary searches with no recorded results.

Detector dogs have patrolled Canadian international airports since 1985. There are currently eight working Canadian Food Inspection Agency detector dogs. The dogs receive training to learn to sniff out over 75 different agricultural products. Daisy's usual 'sniffing ground' is the Vancouver International Airport.

"We are lobbying very hard to get a detector dog permanently stationed at the Calgary International Airport, the main travel hub for Alberta, by the end of this year," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "Diligence is needed to protect our livestock industries from harmful diseases that could inadvertently be brought into the province by a visitor. A detector dog would be another safety measure in our protection arsenal. Daisy, or one of her co-workers, would be more than welcomed as an Alberta canine citizen."

"The province was very pleased that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency allowed Daisy to come to Alberta to work during a time when we expected a very high rate of international traffic," adds Kreplin. "Daisy, the delightful and energetic four-year-old beagle-cross, proved beyond doubt how valuable the services of a detector dog can be.

Contact: *Dr. Cornelia Kreplin*
(780) 427-6159

Got yield maps – now what?

With the right software, yield maps can be converted into 'money-maps', giving producers better information about which parts of a field are contributing to profit and which aren't. Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development has developed just such a tool. Demonstrations of this software will part of the ***Site Specific Management Conference*** being held in Edmonton on December 11 and 12, 2001. For more information about the conference, check on-line: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/conference/ssm/

"The entry point for Site Specific Management (SSM) or Precision Farming (PF) is with a yield map," says George Rock, farm management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Leduc. "Properly calibrated, yield maps are quite accurate and give a visual representation of thousands of little rectangles, the width of the swather or header and the time traveled, usually one second, with the amount of grain harvested in that same time frame. These data are collected by the yield monitor in the combine and exported to the owner's personal computer. The software corrects and smooths the data, producing a yield map."

The yield map shows the yields, usually in bushels per acre. To use SSM or PF for profit, it's important to collect three or more years of yield maps. That is when it is possible to begin to see patterns. The yield map research project, tracked four fields for three years. Three patterns were used:

- those areas that consistently produced higher than average yields,
- those areas that consistently produced lower than average yields and
- those that were higher or lower, depending on a number of factors but usually related to the timing and amounts of soil moisture and rainfall.

Cont'd on page 5

(The maps, however, don't indicate which parts of the field made money and which didn't.)

"The ***Money-Map*** was made by exporting raw data from the yield map and adding prices, variable and fixed costs to the crops," adds Rock. "Then these data were imported into a Geographical Information System (GIS) program (ArcView) and the legends were set to the dollars per acre instead of bushels per acre to produce a money-map."

The money-map gives some useful information. The 12 money-maps completed showed that an average of 8 to 30 per cent of the field did not cover variable costs. For a number of reasons, these areas consistently did not make the average of $130 in variable costs. The data suggested that at least some parts should be set aside for another use.

For example: in 1997 on one wheat field, the crop and variable costs were $128 per acre, total variable costs $14,617.60. About 30 per cent of the field did not cover variable costs by an average of $25. Therefore, $856 ($25 x 114.1 acres x 0.30) had to come from the rest of the field before results for the field would be positive. This year was wetter than average, but at least 15 per cent of this field could be made more profitable by methods, such as reduction or elimination of fertilizer inputs, or to being taken out of cereal and oilseed production altogether.

"The methods used to produce a 'money-map' were slow and expensive," says Rock. "But, Alberta Agriculture produced a low cost and simple method of using yield monitor software to make 'money-maps' for individual farms. A provided template lets producers pick the soil zone and crop, default costs that are provided for guidance, or producers can modify some or all of the numbers if they know their own costs. The ***Alberta Money-Map*** will help you calculate the variable and fixed costs and break-even yields in bushels per acre. Then the program gives step-by-step instructions on how to change the legends using *Case-IH, AgLeader* or *JDMap* software to produce a money-map for a specific farm."

This program is in its final test stage. Producers are welcome to attend the SSM Conference, Edmonton, December 11 to 12, 2001 to see this software at work. For more information on the program or the conference, call Sheilah Nolan at (780) 427-3719 or George Rock, (780) 986-8985. Alberta government numbers are toll free by dialing 310-0000 and then the number.

Contact: *George Rock*
(780) 986-8985

Fall rye – time to consider seeding

Fall rye, as a cereal grain, is grown on very few acres. It is almost always grown on dryland. In fact, it is grown on some of the most marginal dryland because it has tremendous drought tolerance and is very winter hardy.

"One of the main reasons so little rye is grown is low price," says Gordon Frank, cereal and oilseed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "While all cereal prices have been low for several years, rye has just not had a competitive advantage, except when grown on very poor soils."

Fall rye competes exceptionally well with weeds. It can be spring or fall grazed, but this usually reduced yield. Rye's root system and straw resist breakdown, resulting in reduced soil erosion. Fall rye is also used as a spring seeded pasture cereal and there always seems to be a shortage of rye seed for this purpose. Seed supply is a potential market opportunity for fall rye.

"Rye can be used as a feed grain and the current price is approximately $3 per bushel," says Lee Melvill, market specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Brooks. "Most rye is used in the distilling industry. Alberta Distillers in Calgary is a market for 40,000 to 50,000 tonnes per year. In mid-August Alberta Distillers were offering $3.45 per bushel delivered to Calgary. They also sign deferred delivery contracts. Currently, the price for next September is $3.50 per bushel delivered to Calgary. They allow a 20 per cent variance on the amount delivered with no penalty. Black Velvet of Lethbridge buys all their rye through grain companies or brokers. Highwood of High River purchases very little rye grain."

"It's just about the right time to seed fall rye," adds Frank. "Although moisture levels are lower than optimum for germination, moisture later in fall or very early in the spring can still result in vernalization so that the crop will head out next year."

Be sure to seed fall rye shallow. Emergence in one test was twice as good from one-inch seeding depth as a two-inch seeding depth.

The tall growing habit of rye makes it tricky to grow under irrigation, but it can be done. Fall rye has also been grown with good success for silage. The crop is another consideration that may work into crop rotations plans as a cereal grain on some farms.

Contact:	*Gordon Frank*	*Lee Melvill*
	(403) 362-1212	*(403) 362-1212*

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4-H'ers showcase draft horse projects

Youths from across Alberta meet in Olds for Heavy Horse Achievement Day

The biggest day of the year for the 4-H Heavy Horse program was one 17-year-old Jeff Lenz of Carvel won't soon forget, as he earned first place awards in four out of six competitions.

Lenz, a member of the Duffield 4-H Multi-club, was one of 17 Alberta 4-H members to take part in the Heavy Horse Achievement Day, held August 9, 2001 at the Olds Fairgrounds. Sponsored by the Wildrose Draft Horse Association and the Alberta 4-H Program Trust, the Heavy Horse Achievement Day brought together 4-H draft horse project members from across the province to showcase their animals. As well, members were adjudicated by a professional judge on their ability to show, decorate and drive their animals, and on their skill in judging heavy horses.

As a five-year participant in the draft horse project, Lenz was permitted to take part in the team driving competition, in which participants guide a two-horse cart team through a pattern in the show ring. "This is very rewarding for all the work you do," Lenz said after winning the team driving competition. "It took about a year to get my horses broke for cart driving, but it was pretty easy to go to team driving after that."

Lenz has been working with draft h [illegible] old, and hopes to continue working with them in the years ahead. "It's fun. They're unique and more interesting than a light horse project. I'm an ag apprentice right now, but after that's done, maybe I'll find the time to get more into the draft horses."

In addition to team driving, spectators saw participants in their third year of the draft horse program drive one-horse carts around the show ring. 4-H'ers in their second year of the program ground-drove their horses, which requires members to guide them through a show ring pattern as they hold the reigns and walk behind the animal.

Darryl Horn, who judged the participants at the Achievement Day, said he was impressed with the skills the 4-H'ers displayed. "They've all got their horses broke quiet. There were no renegades, so they've done a good job," he said. "Some of them have got a really good start as drivers, but I'd like to see all of them carry a whip in the cart driving classes. But, they were really good and I was impressed with the number of kids in the program."

For more information on joining 4-H call 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta through the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H website at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

For more on the 4-H Heavy Horse Achievement Day, contact: Kathy Baker, event co-organizer at (780) 349-2262.

Contact: Kathy Baker
(780) 349-2262

Agri-News Briefs

Solar energy conference

Solar Odyssey 2001, the 27th Annual Conference of the Solar Energy Society of Canada Inc. (SESCI), is being held on September 27 to 30, 2001 at the Saskatchewan Science Centre in Regina, SK. The theme of the conference is ***Sustainable Energy for Sustainable Communities*** and includes presentations by Dr. Avi Friedman, dierctor of the Affordable Homes program at McGill University; Gregory Allen, of Allen Kani Associates of Toronto; and Rob Dumont of the Saskatchewan Research Council. Cost of the conference is $300 for members and $375 for non-members. Student member registration is $150. For further information, contact Meghan Partington, Solar Odyssey 2001 conference organizer, (306) 791-7945.

Health benefits of honey

The Canadian Honey Council recently reported that scientist in the U.S. have identified many health-giving chemicals in honey that fight heart disease and cancer. Researchers from the University of Illinois have extracted antioxidant compounds from seven varieties of honey made from different floral sources. Antioxidants neutralize cell damaging free radical molecules. Oxygen-free radicals are created as a waste product of natural metabolism activity, and are considered very destructive. The properties of these honeys, and the antioxidant power appeared to be chiefly due to the phenolic composition of honey. Dark-coloured honey proved to be especially good at removing free radicals. These research findings were presented at the annual meeting of the Institute of Food Technologies in New Orleans. For information on the honey industry in Alberta, contact Kenn Tuckey, provincial apiculturist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton, (780) 415-2314.

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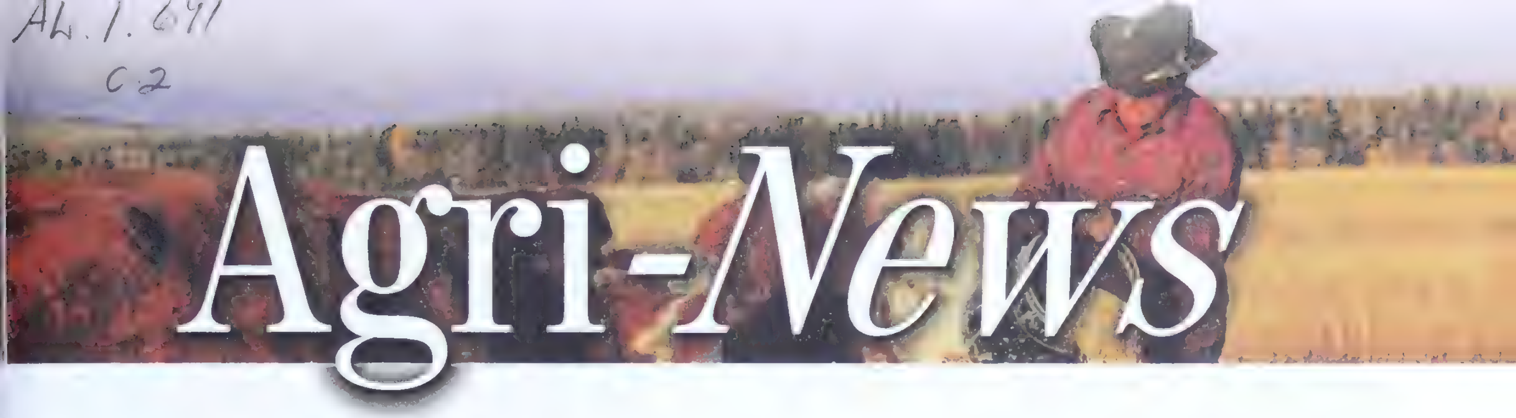

Agri-News

September 10, 2001

Harvest judgement

As harvest approaches, a lot of questions arise and farmers have to rely on their own judgement about their crops. It certainly confirms that there is no written textbook that gives a perfect formula for growing crops.

"One of the most obvious situations this year is the variability of maturity within fields," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "We can make recommendations on the best time for swathing, but only part of the crop fits that description at any one time. It takes a great deal of judgement and a sound knowledge of individual species to determine when it is time to cut."

Canola has the widest variability this year. The spring was dry and much of the crop did not germinate when it was planted. Early germination probably established between 40 and 90 per cent of the crop in any particular field. The rest came weeks later when enough rain was received.

"When it comes to harvesting canola, the printed guideline simply says that seeds in the pods of the bottom third of the main stem should be changing color," continues Hockridge. "Ten per cent of those in the middle third of the plant will be changing and those in the top third will be green but firm. You have to look at individual pods from different parts of the field, but you also have to take a look at the general color of the field too to guess how much is in the optimum stage to cut. If the weather is cool and damp, you may be able to cut earlier because the plant will continue to support pod filling until it dries too much. Argentine varieties shell out more readily than Polish varieties, so leaving it stand too long will cause excessive losses on the more mature part of the crop."

The general guideline for swathing cereals is to wait until you can cut into the kernel with your thumbnail without squeezing out any free water. In fields that are uneven in maturity, producers must decide whether it's best to wait for the greener part of the crop to mature or cut early and avoid loss from more mature plants. Species and variety characteristics determine if the risks are greater from shattering, neck breaking or lodging, or if shrinking of immature seed is a greater consideration.

"There are other considerations for any crop," adds Hockridge. "For instance, if frost is in the forecast, plants will be slightly more protected in the swath. If a prolonged wet spell is expected, crops will dry out quicker when they are

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standing. Severe alternaria infection will cause canola to shell out prematurely, so it may be better to swath early. There are also all the decisions that have to do with time management and the overall farm operation to be considered."

It would be easy enough to make recommendations concerning harvest timing, if one set of criteria would work year in and year out on all operations. However, it is all the little influences occurring during the growing season that make recommendations into only a rough guideline in the practical application of principles.

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

Injury impacts farm worker – safety first this harvest season!

"I knew I should have stopped for the night, but it was busy and the work needed to get done." These words were spoken by Robert Hoffart, but many Alberta farmers can identify with this statement, especially during the busy harvest season.

Amid low grain prices, bad weather and broken equipment, farmers feel the stress of the harvest season. Often safety takes a backseat to just getting the crop off. Hoffart, an employee of L.T. Semler Cattle Co. Ltd. of Barrhead, is a typical example. On September 9, 1999, Hoffart was packing silage at night when high winds blew the silage around, creating blizzard-like conditions. Unable to see where he was, Hoffart rolled his tractor over the edge of the silage pit. He was thrown and pinned under the tractor for half an hour while his co-workers worked to free him.

Hoffart's injuries were extensive. He suffered a crushed vertebra, low back strain, a strained hip, many cuts and a pinched nerve. Hoffart was off work recuperating for over a year. A heavy duty mechanic, welder and machine operator, who normally worked 16-hour days, Hoffart returned to L. T. Semler Cattle Co. Ltd. to do paper work. He started out by working only one hour a day. Currently, Hoffart is working six hours a day. He tried to return for full days, but his doctor advised him against it after the pain got worse.

"I still suffer. The pain is constant. I can't feel my left leg and my lower back hurts," says Hoffart. "I take daily doses of pain medication that makes me sick to my stomach. I wish the pain would go away."

Hoffart's employer, Lorne Semler, was prepared for the possibility of an injury occurring on his farm. Semler has maintained Workers' Compensation coverage for his workers and himself since May 1996. "I constantly stress taking the time to do a job safely, but I feel I owe the protection of WCB coverage to my employees in case something should go wrong," says Semler.

"When I found out that Lorne had WCB coverage I was very glad. WCB has been great, very responsive to any of my questions or concerns," says Hoffart, who receives comprehensive benefits, including 90 per cent of his net income in wage replacement, extensive rehabilitation, including physiotherapy and a back brace, paid prescriptions and other medical expenses.

While Hoffart's medical expenses and wage losses are compensated, Semler's farm business receives liability protection for any injuries by his workers. "In hind-sight I feel purchasing WCB coverage for my workers was one of the best moves I made, not only for my workers, but for my own liability protection as well."

Other Alberta farmers and ranchers are following suit. Over 1,700 farmers have accounts with the Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta. This year alone, about 200 farm owners have elected to purchase the optional coverage.

"Agriculture is a high-risk industry with over four reported farm injuries per day. An injury can be very hard emotionally on the injured person and their family. If they don't have coverage, financial hardships and legal implications can add to that stress," says Dawn Makarowski, WCB Marketing Representative. "First and foremost, it's important to work safely. When you consider the impact a farm injury can have, it's just too great to ignore."

As Hoffart knows, "Not only do you miss out on work, you miss out on life."

Contact: Dawn Makarowski
(780) 498-7733
dawn.makarowski@wcb.ab.ca

Solomon Kyeremanteng
Manager, Farm Safety Program
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-4227

Recognizing copper deficiency in small grain cereal crops

Wheat, barley, oats, triticale and rye (in this order) reflect decreasing sensitivity to soil available copper. All wheat, including winter and spring types, are highly sensitive to low or deficient levels of copper in soil, whereas rye is highly tolerant of low soil copper levels.

"Copper deficiency, particularly in wheat, can result in catastrophic losses in yield and quality especially under high yield management systems," says Dr. Ieuan Evans, research scientist, plant pathology, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Most barley varieties are sensitive, but cultivars may vary considerably in degree, a few oat cultivars respond to copper amendments in deficient soil while triticale responses seem small."

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The factors that contribute to copper deficiency in sensitive cereal cultivars are numerous and frequently additive. Copper deficient soils are most frequently sandy to sand-loam soils, soils high in organic matter and neutral peat (fen type) soils.

Factors that can induce or contribute to copper deficiency in susceptible cereal crops are:

- naturally deficient soils below 0.6 ppm available copper;
- high rainfall seasons that encourage shallow rooting of cereal crops where copper levels are lowest or less available;
- certain foliar cereal weed control herbicides that interfere with copper mobility in the cereal plant;
- soil residual herbicides such as those used in canola crops that may restrict or inhibit proper root development in the cereal rotation crop that follows;
- heavy applications of livestock manure that can biologically tie-up the available copper;
- peaty soils that naturally sequester copper; and
- high levels of N, P, Zn or Mn naturally present or applied as fertilizer that either tie-up or competitively interfere with copper availability to the cereal crop.

Previously, resulting yield and quality problems in affected cereal crops were vaguely blamed on an assortment of infectious diseases. A relatively simple solution, never pursued by Canadian plant breeders, lies in the work done in Australia by Graham et al (1987) specifically the transfer to wheat of the copper efficiency factor gene carried in rye.

"Many copper deficiency symptoms in wheat and barley had in past years been ascribed to bacterial and fungal diseases, herbicide and frost injury, wind lodging and soil unsuitable for cereal production," adds Evans. "The bulk of yield and quality loss in Alberta soils is likely in the range of 10 to 20 per cent of yield and a one-grade drop in quality. It's not the obvious copper deficiency that continues to result in grower losses, but that which is unsuspected and unseen. This relatively unnoticed yield and quality loss resulting from marginal copper deficiency may emerge as a problem in some years in up to 40 per cent of Alberta cereal cropland."

For further reading and confirmation of the copper/pollen/ergot sterility question, check references in the KERNELS newsletter. KERNELS is posted on the Alberta Agriculture web site at: < http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ministry/pid/kernel/>. The Alberta Agriculture site also features a printable factsheet on copper deficiency. It can be found at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/pests/diseases/63010110.html>. This factsheet is also available free of charge at any Alberta Agriculture district office or through the publications office at 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

Contact: Dr. Ieuan Evans (780) 422-0719
Elston Solberg (780) 422-1222
Jill DeMulder (780) 422-0917

Fall dairy meetings

The Dairy Industry Governance Team has made progress in their task of shifting control of the dairy industry governance away from government and into the hands of industry by August 1, 2002.

During the summer, the Team worked in small task groups developing several draft documents, including:

- a mission or purpose statement, goals and core businesses of the new organization
- Plan Regulation – this is the governance/regulatory plan for the industry and will be the basis for discussion at the fall industry meetings. The Team is also further developing the proposal for a negotiating agency
- services and administration suggestions for the new organization
- amendments to the *Dairy Industry Act* and *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* to facilitate the new structure

The task teams present their findings to the overall Governance Team at the September 2001 meeting. After this meeting, the draft discussion paper will be posted to the Governance Team web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/dairygovernance>. Copies will also be available through the Dairy Board office and at the upcoming industry meetings.

A meeting with producer delegates, processors and milk hauler representatives on September 18th at Leduc is scheduled for just prior to the presentation of the discussion paper.

An invitation is extended to all industry stakeholders for meetings being held:

- October 10 – Heritage Inn, Brooks
- October 11 – Lethbridge Lodge, Lethbridge
- October 16 – Red Deer Lodge, Red Deer
- October 17 – Executive Royal Inn, Leduc
- October 24 – Neighborhood Inn, Barrhead
- October 25 – Provincial Building, Vermilion

All meetings will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. Lunch will be served, so please confirm attendance prior to the meeting by calling the Dairy Board (780) 361-1231 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 and then the number). The Governance Team members are looking forward to receiving feedback at these meetings, through the web site or by discussion with one of the members.

The timelines for the Dairy Industry Governance project include:

- June – August/2001 - drafting preparation of regulations
- September to December/2001 – stakeholder input into draft documents

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- January to April/2002 – documents go to legislature for approval
- April - August/2002 – plebiscite, transition and set up of new structure
- August 1/2002 – targeted switch date to the new organization

The Dairy Industry Governance Team members include:

Producers – Bruce Beattie, Lorrie Jespersen, Aart Okkema, Rients Palsma, Bill Feenstra, Bill Van Rootselaar, Lenard Crozier

Processors – Barry Northfield, Brian Miller, Anthony Oetelaar, Gary Reid, Yves Leroux, Bill McLeod, David Krol

Project Leader – Yvonne Grabowsky

Advisors – Brian Rhiness, Floyd Mullaney, Ray Grapentine, Brent McEwan, Mike Pearson, Rod Bradshaw, Dean Hollingworth, George Schoepp, Mary-Kay Brook, Jason Fung, Lloyd Johnston, Maryann Urbanowski, Maureen Bolen

Contact: Maureen Bolen
(403) 934-3355

Harvest of the Past and Heritage Food Festival

For many years, the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village has been the site for the ***Harvest of the Past*** in early September. This year, the Ukrainian Village welcomes the addition of the first ever ***Heritage Food Festival***, sponsored by the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) and Friends.

The Harvest of the Past is a colourful day of historical activities depicting a time when the hard work surrounding the harvest was also looked forward to as a time to join together to celebrate and socialize. On September 16, 2001, the Heritage Food Festival offers visitors the unique opportunity to taste an array of delectable foods – including elk sausage, shaved elk, bison burgers, veggie kabobs, corn-on-the-cob, saskatoon berry pie ice cream, saskatoon berry tarts, bison stew and many more delicious Alberta-grown treats.

"From the information gathered at the Head Smashed In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre, one recognizes that many of our heritage foods date back 11,000 years ago," says Arnold Malone, president of FGSA. "We now have numerous restaurants that are presenting these foods in a very fine and fashionable manor. Heritage foods and regional tastes are important for the tourist industry and it is a necessity that those involved with the growth, development and marketing of heritage products do so with excellence and quality."

Commenting on the Heritage Food Festival, Malone adds, "Holding the Heritage Food Festival in conjunction with the annual Harvest of the Past at the Ukrainian Village is an extraordinary opportunity to showcase the wonderful possibilities of using heritage foods in fine culinary industries, as well as in the home."

Doug Bienert, marketing director for the Alberta Bison Centre, supports the newly formed alliance of Alberta grown food producers. "We are very happy and pleased to be a part of the Heritage Food Festival," he says. "This event is a direct link to bison history and heritage here in this province. The bison were here before us, sustaining the early settlers and once again they have become a thriving industry that can provide the public with a healthy and delicious meat option."

The FGSA is joined in support in this pilot project by the Alberta Bison Association, the Alberta Elk Association, the Alberta Market Gardeners Association, the Alberta Whitetail & Mule Deer Association, the Wapiti Meat Cooperative and the Alberta Reindeer Association, as well as community involvement through the food services coordination of Granny's Lunch Catering in Leduc, the Friends of The Village Food Services, Foothills Creamery, and the NAIT Culinary Arts Department instructors and students.

This group of Alberta Food Friends invites everyone to come out to the event of fabulous foods, interesting and interactive demonstrations by home economist Yvonne McNicole and food journalist John Berry, and fun activities for the whole family.

For further information on the event or a specific association, contact Hettie Phillips, executive director, FGSA at (780) 980-0660, or e-mail <hettie@albertafruit.com>. Web site address for the FGSA is <www.albertafruit.com>.

Contact: Hettie Phillips *Doug Bienert*
(780) 980-0660 *(780) 980-7596*

Club Week helps 4-H'ers set a course for life

The150 young people who attended the Club Week program not only discussed issues but made new friends during this personal development program.

Club Week, a 4-H personal development program held July 24 to 29. 2001 at Olds College, gave 4-H members aged 15 to 19 the chance to talk to their peers about issues ranging from family and personal values to Canadian identity and human rights. Breaking into discussion groups of about a dozen people, participants quickly found that they had a forum where they could explore issues without fear of criticism. "You get to really know your small group," says 17-year-old Nicole Reese of Milk River, a member of the Milk River 4-H Beef club. "It's comfortable in the small group and you can express opinions and talk freely, and no one is going to criticize your point of view."

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Joanna Conner of Fort Macleod agrees that there is a lot to be learned by discussing topics with her peers. "We learned a lot about ourselves through discussions in our small groups. By spending a lot of time with these people, it seems like you can talk about anything. Once the five days are over, you're pretty close."

In addition to small group discussions, participants had sessions with the entire complement of delegates, including a Canadian history quiz, a Mission Possible traffic safety session, a masquerade dance, a banquet and a mini-Olympics game session. Also particularly memorable for delegates was the Overcoming Adversity session, in which participants spoke with people who live with challenges such as blindness, cancer or the lack of a limb. "I think it made a pretty strong impression on everyone," says Conner, a member of both the Fort Macleod 4-H Multi-club and the Midnight Riders 4-H Light Horse club.

Sponsored by Agricore, Agrium, the Alberta Motor Association, the Bank of Montreal, UFA, Lammle's Western Wear, United Grain Growers and the Alberta 4-H Program Trust, Club Week followed the theme ***Destination: Anywhere***. The event focused on the ability of each person to set the course of his or her own life. Having taken part in both small group discussions and larger activities with all Club Participants, 4-H'ers left the program with a stronger sense of their own abilities.

For more information on 4-H, or to join the 4-H program, call (780) 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta by dialing the RITE line at 310-0000), or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Chris Miller*
(780) 422-1834

Alberta 4-H judges compete in Denver

4-H'ers earn trips to US and Canadian livestock shows after topping provincial meet

Kurt Pedersen of Edgerton came out in the top spot at the Provincial 4-H Judging competition, held August 10 to 12 in Olds.

"I was pretty surprised," says the 17-year-old Edgerton 4-H Multi-club member. Although he has judged beef cattle for years, Pedersen thought his lack of experience with swine and sheep judging would put him in the middle of the pack at the provincial competition.

Despite his misgivings, Pedersen was ranked first at the show, giving him first pick to attend any one of five livestock shows in the coming year. Pedersen will be accompanied by Cayley Cunningham of Three Hills, Jaron Arntzen of Sedgewick and Nathan Stone of Westerose on a trip to Denver, Colorado, for the Denver Western Round-Up early next year. At the Colorado event he will compete against American 4-H and Future Farmers of America teams. "I'm a little nervous," Pedersen says of the trip to Denver, where he expects to face some stiff competition. "I'm going to go to as many clinics and competitions as I can, so I can brush up on the things that I don't consider my strengths, such as sheep and swine judging."

The top 20 finishers at the provincial competition were offered their choice of trips to other livestock judging shows. In addition to the Denver Western Round-Up, delegates could choose from trips to Billings, Montana for the Northern International Livestock Exhibition (NILE); the Denver National Western Stock Show; the Canadian Western Agribition show in Regina; and, the Calgary Stampede Livestock Evaluation School.

Sponsored by the Alberta Treasury Branches, the provincial meet brought together close to 65 Alberta 4-H members for two intensive days of livestock judging. On August 10 and 11, participants judged multiple classes of dairy cattle, sheep, swine, horses and beef cattle. Additionally, they had to defend their rankings before a judge in all but four classes. This was the 15th annual 4-H Provincial Judging Competition.

For more information about 4-H or to join, call (780) 422-4H4H (toll free in Alberta through the RITE line at 310-0000), or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

For more information on the 4-H Provincial Judging Competition, please contact Allison King at: (780) 422-1834.

Contact: *Allison King*
(780) 422-1834

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Tips for field pea harvest

- Scout pea field regularly
- Decide whether or not to desiccate – weight the cost of desiccation against the value of the crop and the situation in the field to determine if desiccation is economical
- Desiccate at the proper stage – desiccant is a contact herbicide that should be applied when the top pods are just starting to turn yellow and the rest of the plant is tan or yellow in color
- Consider glyphosate at harvest for weed control but not for quick dry down
- Investigate the benefits of specialized equipment – flexible lifters attached to knife guards, pick-up reels or special headers are all designed for pea harvest
- Peas should be straight-cut or combined immediately after swathing
- Allow tough vines to dry down before attempting to swath/combine or straight-cut a pea field – heavy dew or damp soils can keep moisture in the canopy and make pea vines tough. Wait for the day to warm up enough to dry out the canopy before starting
- Cut at a right angle to the direction of a lodged pea crop
- Set combines at low cylinder speed, open up the concave, and use lots of wind
- Take peas off at 18 per cent moisture or more, and put into aeration – peas dry down quickly from 20 to 16 per cent moisture on hot days. Use aeration to prevent the storage problems of hot spots building up in the bin and crusting
- Run augers slow and keep them full – handling low-moisture peas may increase seed damage, which can affect germination, seed vigour and quality
- Remember the importance of a good straw chopper and chaff spreader – management of pea vines in the fall can save extra tillage passes and headaches in the spring.

For further information, contact Sandra Taillieu, pulse and special crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds, (403) 556-4220.

Alberta's cultivated land

As a province, Alberta covers 157,710,720 acres of land. Of that total acreage, approximately 52 million acres are designated farmland. Almost 32 million acres, just over 62 per cent of farmland, is cultivated land. This total includes all land seeded to crops, summerfallow and tame or seeded pasture. Alberta also has over 16 million acres of natural land for pasture. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has updated the province's agriculture statistics and posted the data on the Alberta Agriculture web site. The information includes data on gross domestic product, farm cash receipts, the livestock industry, dairy production, poultry and egg production, the beekeeping industry, crop production, the greenhouse industry, as well as containing many other agricultural stats. The statistics can be found on-line at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/economic/stats/facts/land.html>.

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Agri-News

September 17, 2001

Halloween an important date for producers

"Alberta's farm families need to mark the middle of October on their calendars with a big red X to remind themselves that Oct. 31, 2001 – Halloween is fast approaching," says John Knapp, the director of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's program services division.

Halloween is always an important time, but this year it also signals the last day that producers can apply for several acreage programs.

"Actually, October 31st is the final day for applications to four programs, two that were announced in 2000 and two that were announced earlier this year," says Knapp.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development recently extended the application deadlines for two acreage programs announced in October of 2000. Producers now have until Oct. 31, 2001 to make application for the $6 per acre supplementary payment and the $3 per acre native forage payment. The $6 per acre supplementary payment followed the March 2000 announcement of a $4.29 per acre payment on 1999 cultivated farmland.

"These extensions won't affect too many producers as about 99.5 per cent have applied for and received payments under last year's acreage programs," says Knapp. "However, the small number of producers who neglected to apply now have until Halloween to make application."

Knapp expects that there are 100 or less producers who haven't applied for the $6 per acre payment and only slightly more than that who haven't applied for the $3 per acre payment.

"We extended the deadlines because we want everyone who is eligible to have an opportunity to apply."

He suggests that producers check their records carefully to see if they applied for and received payment under the first two programs.

"For most producers there is a one in 500 chance they didn't get paid. If you're still not sure, give us a call at (780) 422-9167 and we'll look up your file."

There are two other programs that also have the same Oct. 31, 2001 deadline. They are the $10.29 per acre payment on cultivated land farmed in the year 2000 and the $4 per acre payment on native forage for 2001.

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"Both of these programs are running well, partly because we have gone to an 85 per cent advance payment," explains Knapp. "This allows us to get cash out quickly while we work out errors on applications and duplicate claims on the same land."

To date, the $10.29 per acre program, known as the Canada Alberta Farm Income Assistance Program (CAFIAP), has paid out $172 million to 29,000 applicants. The 2001 native forage program has paid out $11 million to 4,000 applicants.

Knapp notes that once the last of the applications arrive at the end of October, work will proceed on identifying duplicate land claims and other errors. Then, the first of the final 15 per cent payments will go out in early November. The rest will follow in the next several months.

Contact: John Knapp
(780) 415-8788

Feeding cows during adverse times

"When evaluating options, the main one to consider is what the potential rations for a cow and the associated cost will be," says Trevor Yurchak, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Athabasca. "To try to come up with as accurate an estimate as possible, several Alberta Agriculture beef specialists got together and worked out some of the math."

In working out a cost per day number, feed prices used are as follows:

Barley silage - $35/ton

Straw - $40/ton

Peas - $4/bushel

Mixed hay - $80/ton

Wheat - $3.25/bushel

Barley - $3/bushel

30 per cent supplement - $230/tonne

16 per cent pellets - $140/tonne

Canola meal - $170/tonne

All rations were based on a 1,400 pound cow, nine months pregnant, under environmental conditions of -15 degrees Celsius. Feed ration combinations calculated out as follows (prices are per cow, per day):

- mixed hay (30 lbs) and straw (8 lbs) = $1.42
- straw (26 lbs) and 16% pellets (12 lbs) = $1.34
- straw (26 lbs) and peas (11 lbs) = $1.31
- mixed hay (10 lbs), straw (20 lbs), barley grain (8 lbs) and 30% supplement (1 lb) = $1.42
- barley silage (24 lbs), straw (20 lbs) and peas (6 lbs) = $1.30
- mixed hay (10 lbs), straw (20 lbs) and wheat (7 lbs) = $1.24

"These rations show a variation of $0.20 per cow per day from the high to the low cost," adds Yurchak. "For a producer who is feeding 100 cows, this equates to a $20 per day saving, or $4,400 over a 220-day winter feeding season."

The biggest factor this year is sourcing and securing feeds now. Non-traditional feeds will save ration cost and may allow a producer to maintain their herd, but this may take some early planning and effort to find.

"When evaluating options, producers must look beyond the feed cost," says Yurchak. "The cost of delivery is a major portion of yardage, and needs to be considered. The cheapest ration may be the most difficult or time consuming to deliver and that increases the yardage cost of the operation."

Factors that need to be calculated into yardage costs are the time spent to feed the cows; tractor cost for that time, cost of a feed wagon or bale processor, and labour. On top of those costs, utility costs for waterers and repairs on buildings are calculated into yardage cost also. It isn't unreasonable to estimate that even using the cheapest ration of $1.24/cow/cay and adding a conservative $0.35/cow/day for yardage, the cost of keeping a cow could be $1.59/cow/day. This cost is a major increase from the $1 to $1.25/cow/day that is traditionally used as a cost benchmark.

"This year has been a year for tough decision making, and management decisions on whether or not an operation can keep all of its cows is one that should be made soon," says Yurchak.

Producers are advised that when doing the feed testing and ration balancing for this winter's feeding, be sure to consult with their veterinarian, a feed company nutritionist or one of Alberta Agriculture's beef specialists.

Alberta Agriculture beef specialists:

Trevor Yurchak – Athabasca, (780) 675-2252

Christoph Weder – Vermilion, (780) 853-8104

Don Christensen – Smoky Lake, (780) 656-3613

Rod Carlyon – Westlock, (780) 349-4465

Terry Holmgren – St. Paul, (780) 645-6301

Jeff Millang – Olds, (403) 556-4220

Susan Markus – Coronation, (403) 578-3970

Denis Lowry – Grande Prairie, (780) 538-5285

Freeman Iwasiuk – High Prairie, (780) 523-6500

Don Miligan – Red Deer, (403) 340-7005

Ken Ziegler – Rocky Mountain House, (403) 845-8200

Sandi Jones – Hanna, (403) 854-5500

Cont'd on page 3

Brenda Ralston – Strathmore, (403) 934-3355

Lloyd Giebelhaus – Sangudo, (780) 785-2266

James Hansen – Cardston, (403) 653-5130

Harry Brook – Wainwright, (780) 842-7540

Delyn Jensen – Medicine Hat, (403) 529-3616

John VanKeulen – Drayton Valley, (780) 542-5368

Bill Grabowsky – Wetaskiwin, (780) 361-1240

Pat Ramsey – High River, (403) 652-8303

Contact: Trevor Yurchak
(780) 675-2252

Tax deferral for livestock sales

In June 2001, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada announced that livestock producers affected by drought would be eligible for a one-year tax deferral on the sales of breeding stock.

To qualify for this deferral, two conditions must be met:

- The farming business was located in a Prescribed Drought Region (PDR) at some time during the 2001 fiscal period. **All of Alberta** has been designated as a PDR.
- The breeding herd was reduced, by sale or other means, by at least 15 per cent.

"Breeding animals include bovine cattle, bison, goats, sheep, deer, elk, other small ungulates kept for breeding, and PMU horses (horses bred to produce pregnant mare's urine for sale)," says Dean Dyck, farm management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "All breeding animals must be older than 12 months."

Two calculations must be taken into consideration to qualify for the tax deferral. It must first be determined how much the breeding herd was decreased. To calculate this, take the size of the breeding herd at the end of 2001 fiscal period and divide it by the size at the end of the 2000 fiscal period. Heifer calves born in 2001 do NOT qualify. If the figure is not more than 85 per cent, part of the income received in 2001 from the sale of breeding animals can be deferred.

The second calculation is to determine the net sales amount. This is the proceeds from the sale of breeding animals less the cost of breeding animals purchased in the 2001 fiscal period.

"To determine the amount of deferral you are eligible for is fairly simple once you have the two calculations to work with," adds Dyck. "If the herd is reduced by at least 15 per cent but less than 30 per cent, up to 30 per cent of the net sales amount can be deferred. If the herd is reduced by more than 30 per cent, up to 90 per cent of the net sales amount can be deferred."

Producers do not have to defer the total amount they are eligible for. They can include any part of it in their 2001 income. It is important to note that the deferred income must be reported in the fiscal period that ends in the year beginning after the period or periods when the region stops being a PDR; the year when the farmer dies; or, the first year when the farmer is a non-resident.

"Using this tax deferral may be an advantage if the producer will be selling a considerable portion of the cow herd this fall and buying back breeding stock next year," says Dyck. "This is especially true given the projected high feed prices for this winter. Tax deferral is also advantageous if planned cull cow or bred heifer sales this fall will result in a 15 per cent reduction in the overall breeding herd numbers. If a producer is already planning on scaling down or selling off their cow herd, the tax deferral allows them to take advantage of the current prices and spread out the income over two tax years."

It is very important to seek professional advice with this deferral. There are a number of options available that can be tailored specifically to an operation. Alberta Agriculture farm management specialists are also available to help producers consider their options regarding this tax deferral. Contact the local Alberta Agriculture office and ask for the number of the farm management specialist in your area.

Contact: Dean Dyck
(403) 340-7007

Canadian science students learn about greenhouse research at CDC North

Muhammad Younus, one of the researchers at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDC North) and Alberta Agriculture's greenhouse program have been highlighted in the new Grade 7 SCIENCEFOCUS series done by McGraw-Hill Ryerson. SCIENCEFOCUS is a textbook that Canadian Grade 7 students will cover as part of the science curriculum.

"The textbook provides information about the work Younus does and about the greenhouse program at CDC North," says Dr. Stan Blade, director of CDC North, Edmonton. "It is a real honour to be singled out and held up as a learning example to the young people of Canada. We are very proud of Younus and of the work done here at the Centre."

Agricultural research is important to provide new ideas to growers and CDC North has been working with industry and greenhouse growers for years ensuring Alberta producers have the information and research they need to continue being competitive in this growing industry.

"The transfer of new ideas to farmers is a major part of a researcher's job," says Younus. "Research done at CDC North helps identify and develop techniques for successfully growing certain greenhouse crops. The results of that research are passed along to growers to their benefit."

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"Greenhouse production has great potential in Canada," adds Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture's CDC North. "The greatest advantage is that inside a greenhouse the temperature can be controlled, which means that producers can grow plants for a much longer period of time. It is also easier to control disease and pest problems in a greenhouse environment. Vegetable growers have a better idea of what yield will be and refine growing conditions that optimize plant production.

According to a survey conducted by the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association in June 2000, the size of the Alberta greenhouse industry is estimated at 11.761 million square feet (1.09 million square metres or approximately 270 acres, 109 hectares). There are approximately 400 greenhouse growers in the province. Major crops grown are vegetables, bedding plants, cut flowers, potted ornamentals, foliage plants and tree seedlings. The value of the industry is estimated to be about CDN $ 95 million. The industry employs 1,360 full-time and 2,841 part-time people. Fifty-two per cent of greenhouses are seasonal and they include primarily bedding plants, while 48 per cent are year-round operations that include mostly vegetables.

Greenhouse crops in Alberta

- **Vegetables** – 54.0 acres of greenhouse space is devoted to the production of seedless cucumbers, 21 acres to tomatoes, 10.6 acres to peppers and 2.5 acres to lettuce. Over the last 10 years, the average size of a vegetable greenhouse operation has increased to one acre. One acre is considered to be an economic unit for vegetable production.
    - **Cucumber** producers can grow two or three crops per year because it is a relatively fast growing crop. Growers in southern Alberta tend to have a two-crop system, while growers in the central region prefer three crops per year.
    - **Tomato** crops are seeded in the middle of November and planted by early January. Harvest begins about 110 days from seeding and continues until late November. Only one crop is produced in a year.
    - **Pepper** is a more difficult crop to grow. Production takes about 140 days from seed to harvest. The crop is seeded in the middle of October and harvest begins in the middle of March until November. There is a higher investment costs for the construction of a greenhouse to grow peppers.
    - **Lettuce** production is gradually increasing because of more interest in loose leaf and specialty lettuce. It is still not economical to grow crisp lettuce in a greenhouse.
    - At this time, there is some limited production of hot peppers and Chinese vegetables but it is not a significant amount. Production of vegetables for ethnic markets has some potential.
- **Cut flowers** – cut roses and lilies, including alstroemerias, are the two major crops being grown in Alberta. Chrysanthemums and asters are also grown as cut flowers. There are about 10 acres devoted to the production of cut flowers. Growers are trying other cut flowers, such as sunflowers, lizianthus and snapdragons. The demand for good quality flowers is continuing to grow. Many growers have their own flower shops so they are able to market much of their crop through this channel with the remainder being sold to the wholesalers.
- **Potted flowers and ornamentals** – chrysanthemum is the main potted flowering crop being grown for commercial markets. Other potted ornamentals grown include: poinsettias, geraniums, dahlias, begonias and hanging baskets. High quality poinsettias are grown in Alberta. Rooted cuttings are planted in late July and plants are ready for sale by late November.
- **Bedding plants** – out of 270 acres of greenhouse space in Alberta, approximately 126 acres are devoted to the production of bedding plants. There are more than 300 species of plants produced for bedding-out purposes. Geraniums, begonias, New Guinea impatiens, marigolds, petunias, pansies are among the top 10 species grown.
- **Plug production** – during the past 10 years, the production of plugs and rooted material has increased considerably. Two commercial wholesalers buy plant material from local greenhouses and ship across western Canada. Production of good quality plugs requires a greenhouse facility with better environmental controls and excellent skills to manage insects and diseases.
- **Tree seedlings** – approximately 50 acres are devoted to the production of tree seedlings. Almost all of the tree seedlings are now grown by the private sector. Over 100 million seedlings were produced in 2000. White spruce and lodgepole pine are the two major crops being grown. In 1999, there was a limited production of hybrid poplars and other deciduous material.

"A centre, such as CDC North, is an excellent example of how research can develop new technology which can help produce high quality, nutritious food for Canadians," adds Younus. "Alberta Agriculture has established an excellent working relationship with greenhouse growers and continues to work with the industry as it grows. I am very pleased that McGraw-Hill Ryerson chose Alberta to highlight this very important part of agriculture and that we are seen as a success story in the industry."

Younus has recently accepted a position with Olds College as greenhouse instructor. For further information on Alberta's greenhouse industry, contact Mirza at (780) 415-2303.

Contact: Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza Dr. Stan Blade
(780) 415-2303 (780) 415-2311

Low quality feeds for beef cows

This is not a normal year for beef cow-calf producers! It's going to be a real eye-opener for many producers who are experiencing reduced pasture forage yields due to over-grazing and drought-like conditions. Hay crops are producing 20 to 40 per cent of normal, feed prices are more than double and there won't be enough of the typical winter feeds to go around. That's the bad news. The good news it that the quality of hay is good because it hasn't been rained on and the price of cull cows, weaned calves and yearlings are not depressed.

To get beef cows through the winter, producers will need to supplement the available feeds with sources of lower quality feeds and other non-traditional and exotic feedstuffs. Other factors that need to be considered is the cost of energy, protein, processing, convenience and availability into this equation. It should make economic and nutritional sense before you commit yourself!

"One of the initial feedstuffs being tossed around to use this winter by several producers is straw," says Bill Grabowsky, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "Lower quality straws, such as cereals and legume straws (e.g. peas) can be used. Most of these feeds are underutilized in many beef cattle operations but could be the primary feed stuff. Essentially, straws are high in fiber, low in energy, protein, minerals and vitamins when compared to traditional feedstuffs. Straws can be unpalatable and wastage can be high if the cows won't eat it readily. When you're short of bulk fibre, straw with proper supplementation is a reasonable alternative to unavailable, expensive replacement forages."

It is generally suggested that beef cows will eat a diet of straw alone that doesn't make up more than 1.0 to 1.25 per cent of the body weight of the cow. After that amount is met, cows should have possible combinations of grain, higher quality forages such as green feed, silages, protein supplements, cubes, pellets and minerals and vitamins as well. This will depend on the different stages of the cow's production cycle. Consumption of straw diets can be improved by adding supplements, such as molasses and/or liquid protein supplements or by ammoniating the straw. Straw protein levels go up, but intake can be improved by 15 to 25 per cent by ammoniation. Be cautious when handling and using ammonia! Cows prefer oat straw, then barley straw and then wheat straw. Two-row barley is the best and there is variability within the barley varieties. Also, one-year-old barley straw is even better.

"Straw residues can be a preferred choice of feeds, but they must be used cautiously," adds Graboswky. "Beef cows should be in good body condition before large quantities of straw diets are used. A body condition score of a 3.0 is preferred. Thin cows should be fed differently as they won't gain the necessary weight by calving time. Cold weather can increase consumption of straws to the point that digestion is impaired and impaction could result. Feeding concentrated energy feeds, such as grains, and high protein feeds, such as canola or peas and non-protein nitrogen (NPN), along with the straw is necessary to prevent impaction. Some cows will refuse to eat straw diets and so they must be removed from the diet."

When considering using alternate feeds, such as low quality straws, producers have to find out what is best for them and their circumstances. It might pay to have feedstuffs brought in – silages, legume feeds, green feeds or pellets. It also might pay to buy some expensive forage mixes or cheaper cubes or pellets to supplement with straws. Whatever the reasons are for using alternate feeds this winter, consider what's best for the cows nutritionally, and consider the economics especially transportation costs, then make a decision to the best of your ability. Be pro-active in your approach and search out the answers best suited for the cows and the farm operation.

Contact: Bill Grabowsky
(780) 361-1240

Agri-education – school tours

Agri-education is a growing trend with farm direct marketers. It allows the farmer to reinforce the vital link between what's happening on the farm and what's happening in the consumer's daily life.

"By definition, agri-education means providing a quality agricultural, education experience for school children and adults alike," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "Many urban Albertans and their children are blissfully unaware of how a farm operates or how their food is grown. Giving these Albertans the chance to learn first-hand about farm production is a wonderful way of bridging the gap between producer and consumer."

Agri-education is appealing to many farm direct marketers because they can incorporate it into already existing operations. There are several benefits:

- helps use the facility during quieter business times
- provides an alternate source of income with a better profit margin
- provides an interesting change from production
- gives good exposure to lots of children – they influence their parents to come back!

Fields Forever and Berry Ridge are two operations that are involved in agri-education. These operations are located within a few kilometers of each other near the Sturgeon River, just north of Gibbons. They have found their own niche market by researching what is on the elementary school curriculum and then jointly marketing their farms to local schools. Schools

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can tour both or just one of the farms. They focus on helping children learn agricultural concepts and the relationship between plants and animals. The content of the tours is adjusted depending on the grade level visiting the farms.

Providing school tours is just one aspect of what these farms offer. Fields Forever is a working farm operated by Al Wong. It is home to a variety of fascinating animals – llamas, miniature donkeys, pygmy goats, sheep, miniature horse, Vietnamese pot-bellied pigs, peacocks and peahens, fancy chickens, pheasants, rabbits and honey bees. Fields Forever is also a u-pick, with strawberries for sale from early July until frost.

Berry Ridge, operated by the Fossum family, specializes in growing saskatoons, flowers for bouquets, and raising miniature donkeys. Their fresh cut flowers are sold at local farmers' markets. The 50 acres of saskatoons are harvested by machine, cleaned and frozen for sale to the commercial market.

Providing school tours is just one example of how to focus on educating people about agriculture. There are many other possibilities and many things to think about before you go ahead with such a venture. For more information on agri-education, contact Engel at the Westlock office, (780) 349-4465.

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4465

4-H'ers find variety and challenges at PDP

Camps offer personal development & environmental sessions and fun activities

With everything from water slides to debates on intensive livestock operations, it is clear that there is a lot more to Alberta 4-H's People Developing People (PDP) camps than archery and canoeing.

PDP camps, held three times each summer at the 4-H Centre on Battle Lake near Westerose, give 4-H'ers from all over Alberta the chance to meet friends and try activities they don't find at other summer camps. "I met people at PDP that I'll know for the rest of my life. They were all so much fun to be with. I want to keep in touch with them," says 14-year-old Roberta Templeton of Coaldale, a member of both the Readymade 4-H Beef club and the Coaldale 4-H Equestrian club. "I came to camp knowing one person and left knowing everybody."

Templeton took part in the first PDP camp of the summer, held July 22 to 27. Although there was quite a bit of rain during her time there, there was no shortage of activities regardless of the weather.

As well as fun and games, PDP camps require delegates to put some serious thought into a problem solving and consensus building activity. After dividing into eight groups, delegates were asked to form a response to a proposed intensive livestock operation (ILO). Although the livestock operation was purely hypothetical, the thought and debate that the delegates put into the scenario was serious. Each of the eight groups assumed the role of a different stakeholder in the area, ranging from environmentalists and heritage preservation societies to farmers and ranchers. After listening to guest speakers from various groups addressing the same issue, delegates presented their own groups' positions for judges. Although her personal opinion would have been for approval of the ILO, Templeton's group took on the role of a heritage preservation society that had reservations about the proposed livestock operation. Her group's arguments and presentation won over the judges. "They let it go ahead, but the heritage people would have veto power," she adds. "Taking part on the preservationist side has helped me look at it from both sides of the argument. If I had been on the 'for' side, I wouldn't have looked at it this way."

Approximately 55 Alberta 4-H'ers attended each of the three PDP camps. The camps were sponsored by Weyerhaeuser, Agricore, UFA, Lammle's Western Wear and Peavey Mart. The second camp was held July 29 to August 3, and the last PDP camp of the summer ran August 12 to 17.

For more information on joining 4-H, call 422-4H4H (toll-free in Alberta through the RITE line at 310-0000) or visit the 4-H web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/4h>.

For more information on the Alberta 4-H People Developing People program, contact:

Marguerite Stark, Provincial 4-H Programs Specialist
(403) 948-8510

Contact: Marguerite Stark
(403) 948-8510

Agri-News Briefs

2001 Empey Lecture

The Department of Human Ecology of the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary are holding this year's Empey Lecture on October 10, 2001 in Calgary and on October 12 in Edmonton. The theme of the lecture is ***Meeting World Food Needs: Technology, Resources and Environment***. Following this theme, discussions will focus on making the transition to sustainable growth in production in both developed and developing countries, and the resource and environmental constraints faced while making this transition. Advances in molecular biology and genetic engineering, and their impact on crop yields and animal health, will also be discussed. There is no cost for attending the lecture. For further information, contact Barb Cousens at (403) 239-5422, e-mail <barbil@telusplanet.net> or Linda Capjack (780) 492-5997, e-mail <linda.capjack@ualberta.ca>.

Nutraceuticals conference

The American Nutraceutical Association and the Foundation for Care Management are hosting the Nutraceuticals and Medicine Conference on October 12 and 13, 2001 in Nashville, Tennessee. The goal of the conference program is to provide a learning opportunity for healthcare professionals to develop skills in using nutraceuticals and botanicals to optimize their patient's health and quality of life. Alberta has a growing nutraceutical and medicinal herb industry that will benefit from a greater understanding of the benefits of these products. For further information or to register for the conference, contact ANA Customer Service Department, (205) 833-1750 or register via the internet at <www.ana-jana.org>.

Deadline nears for farm safety contest

Alberta high school students have until Sept. 30, 2001 to enter a farm safety contest that requires the creation of a web site. Using their creative skills and ideas, students are asked to develop a web site that communicates the importance of farm safety to teens using the theme *A Safe Farm is a Great Place to Grow*. The contest is sponsored by the Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP), Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD), and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). Scholarships serve as prizes for the top three web sites. First prize is a $1,500 scholarship and a digital stills camera for their school. Second prize is a $1,000 scholarship. Third prize is a $500 scholarship. Entries should be submitted to: Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, 14815 - 119 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T5L 4W2. For more information on the contest, contact Rod Scarlett, executive director, WRAP at (780) 451-5912 or Solomon Kyeremanteng, manager of the farm safety program, AAFRD at (780) 427-4227. Contest information is also available on WRAP's web site at: http://www.wrap.ab.ca.

Canadian broadcaster wins international award

The Academy of Western Artists (AWA) has named Hugh McLennan, long-time broadcaster, horse trainer and rancher from Western Canada, Broadcaster of the Year. McLennan and his wife Billie flew to Fort Worth, Texas on July 10 for the AWA's 6th annual awards show where he was presented with the Will Rogers Award for Western Excellence at a gala event. McLennan is heard weekly on many radio stations in Canada, and on the world-wide web at <www.cowboylife.com>. For further information, contact Hugh McLennan (250) 573-5731.

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Agri-News

September 24, 2001

Anthrax confirmed in Wheatland County

Alberta livestock producers are being advised to keep a close eye on their pastured cattle due to a confirmed outbreak of anthrax in Wheatland County.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) confirmed an outbreak of anthrax in a cow/calf herd near Cluny, Alberta on Sept. 8, 2001. To date, 13 animals have died. Twelve of the 13 deaths have been attributed to anthrax. The remaining cattle have been removed from the affected pasture and the entire herd has been vaccinated. The carcasses have been burned, covered with lime and buried.

"Most anthrax outbreaks are characterized by the sudden death of one or more animals," says Dr. Gerald Ollis, the head of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agri-Food Surveillance Systems branch. "As a result, livestock producers should watch their animals closely and have their herd veterinarian conduct a postmortem on any animal found dead for no apparent reason."

Ollis says, "The outbreak in Cluny is not a cause for panic, but it does justify heightened awareness."

In Canada, anthrax is a reportable disease under the *Health of Animals Act* and the CFIA has the legislated mandate to control and eradicate outbreaks. The disease is caused by the bacterium *Bacillus anthracis*. It affects livestock species, as well as wildlife. Ruminants (cattle, bison and sheep) are the most susceptible. Horses have an intermediate susceptibility. Swine and carnivores, such as dogs, are the least susceptible.

In humans, anthrax is most often a mild disease involving the skin. It is usually contracted by handling infected livestock or contaminated materials such as wool or hides.

It is important to realize that the anthrax in livestock is very different from the anthrax bacteria developed for germ warfare," says Ollis

Anthrax is not new to Alberta as there have been several outbreaks in recent years. However, in temperate climates such as in Canada, anthrax outbreaks are almost always sporadic. Anthrax is introduced to a geographical area by an infected animal or by infected material such as contaminated feed. Under the right conditions, *B anthracis* cells form a spore that is extremely hard to destroy.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"These spores can persist in soil for at least 60 years," says Ollis.

Animals are usually infected when they eat contaminated soil or feed. Anthrax does not spread through direct contact between an infected animal and other healthy animals. Infected animals usually die within hours of becoming sick. Thus, attempting to treat an animal sick with anthrax is usually unsuccessful.

The following factors are often associated with anthrax:

- soil that has a pH of 6.5 or higher, a high concentration of organic matter, a high calcium level
- a year that has been unusually dry and unusually wet, in either order
- cattle drinking from standing water (e.g. sloughs and dugouts)
- areas where pasture drainage has been changed or the surface soil has been recently disturbed
- areas where anthrax has been previously diagnosed
- herds are undernourished or nutritionally stressed overgrazing has occurred

For additional information on anthrax, contact your local veterinarian.

Contact: Dr. Gerald Ollis
(780) 427-6406

Alberta's Environmental Farm Plan initiative moves forward

With a spring 2002 launch in mind, an industry led initiative is making progress towards developing an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) for Alberta. "A broadly based steering committee of 13 representatives from different commodity sectors and other interest groups such as Ducks Unlimited, Alberta Environment and the Environmental Law Centre, are helping set the framework around delivery and funding issues," explains John Kolk, Committee Chair and AESA (Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture) Council.

Discussions so far with the leadership in a number of different commodity groups, and people who service the farm sector are very positive. "There is a high level of awareness about the need for a farm level EFP assessment process, and almost everyone has encouraged us to put time and effort into developing an Alberta EFP," says Kolk. "There is recognition that having a good sense of the risks that each farm operation faces is likely going to be an entryway into the marketplace, maybe not next year, but certainly within five years."

Over the past few months, several commodity organizations, interest groups, and individuals have shared their ideas about an Alberta EFP. In March, the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association visited Alberta and shared their experience with over 150 industry and government representatives. The EFP working group has made presentations to 26 different organizations over the spring and summer. An additional 86 questionnaires have been completed and returned.

Based on questions raised through consultations, the Environmental Law Centre is also preparing a report on potential exposure to liability through participating in the EFP process.

One of the priorities of the EFP Committee is to expand their partnerships. "We're off to a pretty good start, but we're going to need support and time commitments from municipalities, Agriculture Service Boards, commodity groups and other environmental and farm groups that want to see Alberta farmers lead in the EFP area," explains Kolk.

Currently, the key focus is on developing the EFP workbook. "We have over 40 people involved in rewriting the Ontario Manual to address Alberta issues and legislation," says Kolk. "From our consultations, we realized we needed to include an additional module on pasture and forages in the manual, as this is a key component of the Alberta industry."

Trying to build some consistency across Canada is one of the reasons Alberta is using the Ontario manual as a model. Alberta will be involved in discussions over the next year between the federal government and the provinces and territories to see what EFPs are going to look like across the country. "By using the Ontario model, we end up with an EFP that is consistent across Canada, but still has the local industry input that's really important to Alberta farmers," adds Kolk.

A pilot project will be launched this fall to test this manual with producers from across the province who represent different commodities. This will be the first run to see how well the manual fits into an Alberta context. The committee will be looking for input and feedback throughout this process. A final product is anticipated by March 2002.

Contact: Dr. Joyce Van Donkersgoed
(403) 782-5153
Therese Tompkins
(780) 427-3588
Barb Shackel-Hardman
(780) 427-9801
John Kolk, Chairman
(403) 732-4384

Alberta Farm Water Program fine-tuned

Recent changes to the Alberta Farm Water Program (AFWP) make it more responsive to the needs of Alberta farmers who continue to deal with drought conditions.

The $20 million program, announced in June by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, is intended to develop a long-term approach to drought management for farmers.

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"The changes do not alter the basic objective of the program, but in some cases, they do increase the maximum available payment for some farmers and make some previously ineligible expenses, eligible under the program," says Lloyd Andruchow, the head of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's program policy branch. "As originally announced, the program will cover one-third of eligible development costs for those projects that qualify, and for the majority of applicants, the maximum payment will be $5,000."

Andruchow says that there are four major areas of change to the program. They include changes to multi-household projects, large farms/intensive livestock operations, water co-op pipeline membership fees and non-domestic, emergency water hauling.

If a project involves the development of a new water system for domestic use in a multi-household farmyard, additional funding is now available. An extra $1,000 per additional house, to a maximum of five households per farm unit, is available on one-third share of eligible costs.

"For example, a farmyard with two houses connected to a new water supply project costing $18,000 is now eligible for $6,000; the original $5,000, plus an extra $1,000 for the second house," explains Andruchow.

To qualify for this additional funding, you must complete the AFWP Supplementary Application – Multi-households form.

The second change to the program affects producers who own large farms and intensive livestock operations. Originally, they were eligible for up to $5,000 based on one-third of the water development cost. This still applies to producers with 999 or less animal units. However, with the recent changes, producers with 1,000 to 1,999 animal units are now eligible for up to $10,000 and operations with 2,000 to 2,999 animal units are now eligible for up to $15,000.

There is no maximum payment under this portion of the program. Applicants need to fill out the AFWP Supplemental Application – Large Operations form to qualify.

The third change to the program relates to water co-op pipeline membership fees.

"The AFWP always shared the construction cost for an individual farmer to bring a line from the main trunk to a yard site, but now applicants are also eligible to claim the membership and connection fees as well," says Andruchow.

Applicants to this portion of the program are required to fill out the AFWP Supplementary Application – Water Co-ops form.

The fourth change to the program deals with non-domestic, emergency water hauling. If farmers have exhausted all the possibilities for water development and are forced to haul water for agricultural purposes, they can now submit their receipts to the AFWP. An example would be where there was no surface water to pump from and no ground water to drill into.

"To claim for water hauling expenses under the program, the AFWP Supplementary Application – Emergency – Water Hauling form must be completed by the applicant and it must be reviewed and signed by Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's water specialist in the area," explains Andruchow. "Once the water specialist has signed the form, the applicant must sign the form in front of a Commissioner of Oaths."

The deadlines for the program remain unchanged. It runs from January 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002. Applicants have until May 31, 2002 to submit their applications. Receipts must accompany each application.

"People who have already claimed under the program are still eligible for extra funding under these new provisions," says Andruchow. "We encourage them to send in the supplemental application form that relates to their situation."

Supplemental application forms are available from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development district offices or on the department's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/farmwater>. For more information, contact the program service division at (780) 422-9167.

Contact: *Lloyd Andruchow*
(780) 427-3338

Keep farm kids safe

Every child is precious. Keeping children safe on the farm is a matter of the utmost importance. During the very busy harvest season, attention to safety and safe practices is even more imperative.

"Safety is important all year long," says Solomon Kyeremanteng, head of the farm safety program with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The one thing safety takes is perhaps a little more time. During harvest, time is often in short supply and that's one of the reasons that farm accidents happen with more frequency at this time of year."

There are some farm safety practices that if consistently used, can go a long way in safeguarding children and other farm family members:

- practice a 'No Riders' policy – no extra seat, no extra rider on any equipment
- do a safety walk-about on the farm with the family, discuss hazards (family vehicles, machinery, livestock, electrical, fire, falls, chemicals, sewage lagoons, ponds, ditches, old wells, grain bins, wagons, trenches and any others). Talk about how to be safe, how to report dangers to an adult, and how and whom to phone for help. Put up a list of emergency phone numbers and directions to the farm near each phone

Cont'd on page 4

- create a safe play area. Fence off an area and equip it with a variety of play centres for young children. Remember the farm is a workplace as well as a living place, and for youngsters, separation of the two is the safest
- fence off any water body near the home
- always check for children around vehicles and equipment before driving
- actively teach safety on a regular basis and encourage children to participate in safety day camps and Safety Smart courses where available
- let the children teach the adults about safety
- buy a riding helmet for youngsters who are learning to ride a horse and encourage them to wear it every time they ride
- stress the danger of large equipment and large animals to small children. Teach youngsters to stay away from them
- assign age-appropriate tasks to children, keeping in mind that they are much less likely to perceive and react to dangers than an adult
- train children in safe handling of livestock and equipment before tasks are assigned and supervise them closely as they learn the task they are doing
- take a first aid course

"Practicing safety as a matter of course is the best way to instill safe practices in all members of the family. Take the needed time to be safe on your farm," adds Kyeremanteng. "The farm safety program slogan says it all – A Safe Farm is a Great Place to Grow!"

Contact: Solomon Kyeremanteng
(780) 427-4227

Canning with safety in mind

It's time to bring out the mason jars, canners, blanchers and the favorite food preservation recipes. Whether you're using the bounty from the backyard garden or produce carefully chosen from the local market garden or farmers' market, make sure those canning recipes include updated, safe canning and preserving techniques.

"Processing times and techniques have changed," says Jane Carlyle, coordinator of the Food Safety Info Line. "Recipes that have been passed along from grandmothers or neighbors may not provide adequate and safe directions for current processing times and techniques."

The Home Economists staffing the Food Safety Info Line are going to be busy over the next few months with consumer questions related to home canning and preserving. According to Carlyle, the four greatest concerns they will be addressing include:

- should jams, jellies, pickles and relishes be processed? Is paraffin wax adequate for sealing jars of jams and jellies?
- is a pressure canner required for low acid foods such as vegetables and meat?
- is it necessary to adjust processing time according to altitude?
- do vegetables need to be blanched before freezing?

Answers to these and other food safety concerns about canning and preserving can be obtained by calling the Food Safety Info Line at 1-800-892-8333.

Professional Home Economists can assist you by clarifying processing times, the use of pressure canners or water bath canners, as well as providing blanching times for vegetables.

Contact: Jane Carlyle
1-800-892-8333

Alberta 4-H'ers a hit at California conference

California 4-H'ers learn about igloos, two-stepping and 4-H Canadian style

California may have its share of attractions, but a pair of Alberta 4-H members were surprised to find that while in California, they were the biggest attractions of all.

Shawna Wallace of Hanna and Jonathan Zadunayski of Vimy, both taking part in the California State Leadership Conference in San Diego on August 10 to 12, 2001, often found themselves the centre of attention while mingling with fellow 4-H'ers there. "As soon as you mention you're from Canada, you're the most popular person in the room," comments Zadunayski, a member of the Vimy 4-H Beef club. "I've got about 500 new e-mail addresses from the conference."

"It was so funny, because you were the centre of attention wherever you went," says Wallace, currently a member of the Lethbridge-Coaldale 4-H Beef club. "There were people there from Japan and people from France, but we were the people they wanted to talk to. A lot of them want to come to Canada now that they know we don't live in igloos. One girl even asked me if I had ever worn shorts in my life."

Although Canada isn't the perpetually frozen nation some California 4-H'ers may have imagined it to be, the Alberta 4-H'ers probably wished they could have brought some cooler temperatures with them, as California proved to be much warmer than either of them expected. "It was 112 Fahrenheit (44 Celsius) when I got off the plane," adds Zadunayski, who spent a week living with a host family near the state capital of Sacramento prior to the conference. "I only took three pairs of shorts, so I was wearing them all the time." Although Wallace found her home stay on a farm near San Jose somewhat more temperate, she was nonetheless surprised at just how hot some days were.

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The State Leadership conference also held a few surprises. Most notably, the Alberta delegates found out that California 4-H'ers don't specialize in any one type of club, as is common here. The Californians were equally surprised to hear that Wallace and Zadunayski have both been in beef clubs for years. The conference also introduced the Alberta delegates to a variety of new projects, ranging from making balloon animals and carving hunting decoys to writing press releases and introducing new games to 4-H camps. Wallace and Zadunayski also taught the California delegates something new – the two-step. "We were the only two people at the dance who knew how to two-step," says Zadunayski. "They would just stand around and jive to country music."

Sponsored by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the California trip is awarded annually to Alberta's top 4-H members. By participating in the Alberta 4-H Selections program each spring, close to 60 Alberta 4-H members are chosen to travel to a number of different destinations across Canada and the United States. These trips, ranging from inter-provincial exchanges to 4-H congresses in Montana and California, give participants the chance to experience the diversity of both Canada and the United States and to see how 4-H programs operate in different areas.

For more information on 4-H or to join, call (toll-free in Alberta through the RITE line at 310-0000) 244-4H4H, or visit the 4-H web site at <www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Marguerite Stark
Provincial 4-H Programs Specialist
(403) 948-8510

Agri-News Briefs

Hort Congress 2001

The 2001 Alberta Horticulture Congress is featuring Margery Daughtrey, senior extension associate, Department of Plant Pathology, Cornell University, New York, as one of the speakers this year. The title of Daughtrey's presentation is ***Diseases – Diagnosis and Management of Diseases of Greenhouse Ornamentals***. This will be an opportunity for growers to learn about techniques for recognizing and minimizing many of the diseases that plague greenhouse flower crops. The Congress is being held on November 8 to 10, 2001 at the Mayfield Inn and Suites, Edmonton. The Congress is held in conjunction with the Prairie West Trade Show. For further information or to receive a program and registration form, contact Shirley Alton, Congress coordinator at (780) 415-2324.

Canada's richest ranch horse competition

The Ranch Horse Classic Competition and Sale is being held on October 20, 2001 at the Calgary Stampede Grounds. Promoted as ***A Quest for the Best***, this competition sponsored by Ayerst Veterinary Laboratories offers guaranteed cash prizes of $10,000. The competition gets underway at 9:00 a.m. The competition judge is Bob Moorhouse, general manager of the Pitchfork Land & Cattle Company, Guthrie, Texas and Eskridge, Kansas. The sale follows the competition and begins at 1:00 p.m. For further information, contact competition manager, Ken Budvarson (403) 728-3493. Information is also available on the internet at <www.naeric.org>. Horses involved in the sale can be viewed at <http://www.northernhorse.com/naeric/ranchhorseclassic/>.

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Agri-News

October 1, 2001

Field pea straw as an alternate feedstuff

The drought of this past growing season in many parts of the prairies has livestock producers scrambling for feed. The amount of field pea straw baled to date is unprecedented. However, many producers purchasing field pea straw for feed do not know what the nutritive value is. This is a problem for two reasons; first, it is difficult to determine what the price of the straw should be, and second, it is difficult to formulate a satisfactory ration for livestock.

"Western Canadian research into the nutritive attributes of field pea straw is limited," says Mark Olson, pulse and special crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "Results from a three-year study on over 450 field pea straw samples from various locations in south central Alberta show large variability in nutritive value between years and locations."

Recent articles and reports suggesting field pea straw is 7.5 per cent protein are misleading. This number (7.5 per cent) is based on an average or mean that may or may not be representative of the straw you plan to feed. Variability in field pea straw may be a reflection of soil fertility, past and present, moisture and environmental or growing conditions.

Mean Values of Selected Constituents of Field Pea Straw (1995-97)

Year	Protein %	ADF%1	NDF%2	Calcium	Phosphorus
1995	12.5	50.5	63.7	1.53	0.16
1996	4.72	53.1	67.2	1.68	0.04
1997	6.83	47.6	59.9	1.76	0.076
All years	7.56	50.1	63.2	1.68	0.087

(Olson 2001)

APGC Zone 2
ADF%1 – Acid Detergent Fiber – measure of digestibility
NDF%2 – Neutral Detergent Fiber – measure of digestibility

In general, field pea straw quality appears to be better than cereal straw. Field pea straw can be significantly higher in protein, but high fibre levels limit digestibility and expected feed intake.

"Field pea straw is primarily useful for beef cow rations where high quality roughage is not as important as other classes of cattle," adds Olson. "Field pea straw, when fed with higher quality roughage, grain or a combination of both, can produce a very cost effective ration. Generally, higher protein levels makes pea straw a better match with grain than with cereal straw."

Palatability studies with field pea straw have not been conducted. Palatability refers to how well an animal will consume the feed. Antidotal evidence provided by beef producers, suggest a large range in field pea straw palatability,

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from cattle devouring the field pea straw to complete rejection. Additionally, some livestock producers have indicated that field pea straw sprayed with pre-harvest treatment may have lower palatability. To date there is no scientific evidence to support or refute these observations.

Processing the straw, such as grinding or chopping it with machines like mix mills, or hay busters, and mixing the straw with other feeds may help with palatability.

Farmers who are thinking of using field pea straw as an alternate feed should test the straw before purchasing and feeding. For further information contact Olson or one of Alberta Agriculture's pulse and special crops specialist.

Contact: *Mark Olson*
(403) 782-3301

Regulation for destruction and disposal of dead animals

AR229/2000, ***Regulation for the Destruction and Disposal of Dead Animals***, was approved by Cabinet in November 2000. The legislation replaces the old Regulation that was in effect since 1966.

AR229/2000 now allows natural disposal (scavenging) and composting as methods of disposal, in addition to the traditional methods of burial, burning and transportation to a rendering plant, allowed under the old Regulation. Inclusion of natural disposal and composting recognizes that many dead animals are currently being safely disposed of by one of these two methods.

"Under the new Regulation, animals confirmed or suspected to have died from a reportable disease must be disposed of under the direction of an inspector appointed under the federal *Health of Animals Act* or a veterinary inspector appointed under the provincial *Livestock Diseases Act*," says Dr. Jim Henderson, veterinarian with the regulatory services branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Fairview. "Specific acceptable setbacks are included for natural disposal, composting and burial to ensure protection of the environment, particularly water sources. The Regulation also ensures that disposal does not create a nuisance for neighbors. Burning must be done in accordance with AR124/93 – *Substance Release Regulation*."

Specific conditions relating to natural disposal include:

- only property owned or leased by the owner of the dead animal can be used
- animals euthanized with drugs or other chemical substances cannot be disposed of in this manner
- total weight of animals at any one site must not exceed 1000 kilograms
- minimum distance of 500 metres between disposal sites
- disposal sites at least 500 metres from wells, domestic water intakes, lakes, streams, etc.
- disposal sites at least 400 metres from residences, road allowances, parks or neighboring livestock facilities, including pastures
- natural disposal must not create an nuisance as defined in law.

Natural disposal cannot be used in the case of suspect or confirmed cases of reportable disease, nor can this method be used by abattoirs.

Specifics relating to composting include:

- compost sites a minimum of 100 metres from residences, neighbouring livestock facilities, wells and natural bodies of water
- compost facility must be constructed to keep out scavengers
- each animal or part thereof must not exceed 100 kilograms
- total volume of dead animals must not exceed 25 per cent of total compost pile
- all dead animal parts must be covered by at least 15 cm of compost material

Burial sites must be:

- at least 100 metres from residences, neighbouring livestock facilities, wells and natural bodies of water, 300 metres from a primary highway, 100 metres from a secondary highway and 50 metres from any other road allowance
- bottom of the pit must be at least one metre above the seasonal high-water table
- pit must be covered with a minimum of one metre of loose soil or 600 cm of compacted soil

The new Regulation also makes provision for the use of a wooden or metal lid on burial pits providing quicklime is applied in sufficient quantities to control flies and odor.

There is still a requirement that dead animals be disposed of within 48 hours, with the following exceptions:

- dead animals may be held for up to one week in an enclosed structure that has been specifically constructed for the storage of dead animals
- dead animals may be stored indefinitely in a freezer unit or outside as long as the ambient temperature is low enough to keep the animal completely frozen

"Enforcement of this Regulation will be complaint driven," says Henderson. "Complaint investigation and resolution will be the responsibility of the Prevention/Investigation unit of Alberta Agriculture's Regulatory Services Branch."

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Copies of AR229/2000 can be ordered from Alberta Queen's Printer, 5th Floor Park Plaza, 10611 - 98 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5K 2P7. Copies will soon be available on-line at <www.gov.ab.ca/ap/reg.html>.

Contact: *Jim Henderson* *(780) 835-2238* *Floyd Mullaney* *(403) 340-5320*

Environmentally sustainable agriculture

Environmentally sustainable agriculture refers to agricultural practices that maintain ecological integrity or productive capabilities of soil, water, air and wildlife. Environmentally sustainable practices requires farmers, ranchers and land managers to be good land stewards. Good land stewardship includes renewing soil, protecting water and air quality and conserving biodiversity.

"There are many agricultural practices that have been identified as environmentally beneficial," says Carol Bettac, Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture (AESA) program manager with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "In order for attitudes and farm management practices to change, there needs to be an understanding of environmental issues, concerns and solutions. Sustainable nutrient management, grazing and riparian management, and integrated crop management, including responsible pesticide use, are being promoted by both the agricultural industry and conservation agencies."

To be sustainable, environmentally responsible agriculture systems must also be economically viable and socially acceptable. The AESA Council represents stakeholders in the agriculture industry and is working to identify key challenges and issues, and deliver programs that move the industry toward sustainable goals.

The challenges are three-fold: provide goods and services the public wants; operate your agriculture business in an environmentally responsible manner; and, make a living.

While research, incentives and education programs provided by government help, it is up to farmers and land managers to operate in environmentally sustainable ways. For more information on AESA, contact Bettac at (780) 427-3885.

Articles, reports and information on AESA's, extension, processing and resource monitoring components and om-line applications are available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca>. Simply click on the site search engine and type in AESA.

Contact: *Carol Bettac*
(780) 427-3885

Mexican border service for Canadian agri-food exporters

A new service, helping Canadian exporters navigate the complex Mexican import regime, should make it easier to get Canadian agriculture and agri-food products into Mexico. The service is intended to help the agri-food industry deal with difficulties they experience with technical border details, particularly for processed food products.

"The challenges Canadian exporters face stem partly from uncertainty among Canadian exporters about specific clearance requirements," says Marcy O'Connor, trade director, Mexico-Latin America, with Alberta Economic Development, Edmonton. "There can also be differing interpretations between exporters or certification bodies and Mexican officials on what the requirements entail. It became apparent that some facilitation and intermediary action was needed."

The new service for Canadian exporters – provided on a pilot project basis jointly by the federal government and Alberta and four other provinces – provides a full-time resource person at the border to help ensure Canadian companies are well prepared to meet Mexican requirements. The resource person will be also available to ensure any difficulties that occur are resolved quickly so Canadian goods can move more smoothly across the border.

Luis A. Pérez Benitez, a lawyer with extensive experience consulting with Canadian companies doing business in Mexico, has been retained for the pilot project.

Stationed full time at Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, the second busiest international border crossing in the Americas, Pérez will provide services and information to exporters from the five provinces involved in the project. For example, he will be available to consult with companies prior to shipping to ensure all paperwork is in order and will be on-site to troubleshoot any problems if a shipment is held up at the border.

Pérez will also develop strong working relationships with the Mexican government and other border officials. These relationships should help facilitate more efficient communications and encourage on-the-spot resolutions of clearance problems for Canadian agri-food exporters at Nuevo Laredo and at other Mexican border crossings.

"To further smooth the export process to Mexico, an information session will be held in Calgary on October 25, 2001," adds O'Connor. "The session will provide advice and tips on exporting to Mexico, and will explain how Canadian agri-food exporters can successfully use the new border representative. The intent is to expand the pilot project in the next fiscal year, making the border services fully available across the country."

Ted Haney, president of Canada Beef Export Federation, estimates that over 80 per cent of the beef its members export

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to Mexico passes through the Laredo border crossing. "We are very pleased to see this service at the border. The business style is changing in Mexico and having local representation will assist during the transition period. There have also been examples of Mexican import requirements changing without notice to Canadian certification bodies. This position will facilitate communication with local Mexican inspection authorities, allowing the trucks to continue crossing without disruption."

Mexico has become one of the largest and most important markets for Canada's agri-food products. Since NAFTA, agri-food trade between Canada and Mexico has increased 88 per cent – last year totaling more than $1 billion. Tariffs on most trade commodities between Canada and Mexico are scheduled to be eliminated by Jan. 1, 2003. This will significantly expand the opportunities for sale of Canadian agri-food products in Mexico.

Contact: Marcy O'Connor
(780) 422-1762

Luis A. Pérez
(011-52) (87) 19-00-03
Mobile: 1 (956) 206-8771
Fax: (011-52) (87) 19-07-64
E-mail: luispere@nlaredo.globalpc.net

Creating a brand is more than just a fancy package

The concept of branding is all about creating a *character package*. When people see a business name on a package or in an advertisement, it should be clear what the business is, what its reputation is and what level of service customers can expect.

"As an agri-preneur with limited resources, a brand can be your company's most valuable asset," says by Karen Goad, agri-food consultant with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Grande Prairie. "Once established, a brand lets you charge a premium for products while retaining market leadership. Brands are important to consumers because they represent attributes, values, benefits and personality. In the customer's mind, brand identification provides the company name with a separate identity from the competition, making the products desirable, wanted and even needed."

Marketing begins with the customer. Branding begins at home. A brand is a combination of product plus perceived character plus promise. It's a contract with the consumer that conveys a series of expectations and has a certain predictability. It's based on the long-term values held by the company executives.

"A business knows it has a brand and is not just another commodity when it can control price and demand," adds Goad. "Commodities are supply-driven. Typically with commodities, as supply increases the price drops. Brands are demand-driven and allow the business to achieve a premium price even in times of good supply. A brand allows a business to differentiate their products and services and take advantage of a loyal customer base."

It is important for a business to begin thinking like a brand, rather than a commodity. ***A commodity*** has no unique features or difference; the price is supply driven; it is easily substituted. ***A branded product*** is a differentiated product; incorporates value added pricing; is not substitutable; portrays image, personality, integrity; and, creates a benchmark for competition.

Advantages of a strong brand offer include:

- reduced marketing costs due to consumers' brand awareness and loyalty
- price premium because the brand has higher perceived quality
- protection against price competition from other products
- reduced day-to-day competitive pressure
- a profitable market niche resulting from product differentiation
- higher status with the consumer which serves as a launching pad for product line extensions
- increased value of the firm as brand values can be higher than other asset values in a business
- increased product recognition and probability of purchase

"Every company should have a baseline branding strategy," says Goad. "The smaller the business, the stronger the brand has to be. If you don't spend money on branding, the only criteria left to compete on is price, and a larger company will almost always have the price advantage."

A branding strategy is the foundation of all customer contact activities. Properly cared for, a brand symbol can bestow credibility, attract instant attention and increase profitability.

The ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** is a quarterly newsletter containing timely, incisive and creative ideas for agriculture entrepreneurs. The first issue of the ***Alberta Agri-Preneur*** was sent out at the end of July. Albertans who receive the ***NorthWest Processor*** newsletter will have automatically received this new newsletter. Anyone not already on the newsletter mailing list can receive it available free of charge by phoning (780) 349-4465 (dial 310-0000 first for toll-free access).

Contact: Karen Goad
(780) 538-5629

Agri-News Briefs

FGSA opens office

The Fruit Growers Society of Alberta (FGSA) now has a permanent home at the Agriculture Building in Leduc. The office opened June 2001 and is now fully operational. The FGSA office is open Monday to Friday during normal business hours. Ms. Hettie Phillips is the newly contracted executive director. For further information about FGSA, contact Phillips at (780) 980-0660 or e-mail <hettie@albertafruit.com> or <info@albertafruit.com>. The mailing address for FGSA is 4301 - 50th Street, Leduc, Alberta T9E 7H3.

Planning underway for rural tourism conference

The Rural Tourism Conference II is set for Feb 11 to 13, 2002, at the Camrose Regional Exhibition, Camrose. The theme for the 2002 conference is ***Growing Rural Tourism – Moving Forward***. Professor Ed Mahoney from Michigan State University has been confirmed as one of the conference speakers and Dr. Ted Manning from Ottawa, one of Canada's top authorities on rural tourism development, will also be featured as a keynote speaker. Delegates will have a chance to speak with both our keynote speakers as part of the overall program for 2002. Further program details are still being finalized. Information about the conference will be updated and available on-line at <www.tourismtogether.com>. Registration forms will also be available on the website. The Camrose Regional Exhibition, Travel Alberta, and the provincial departments of Economic Development and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development are sponsoring the 2002 conference. For more information call toll free 1-866-488-9497 or email <Ruraltourism02@aol.com>.

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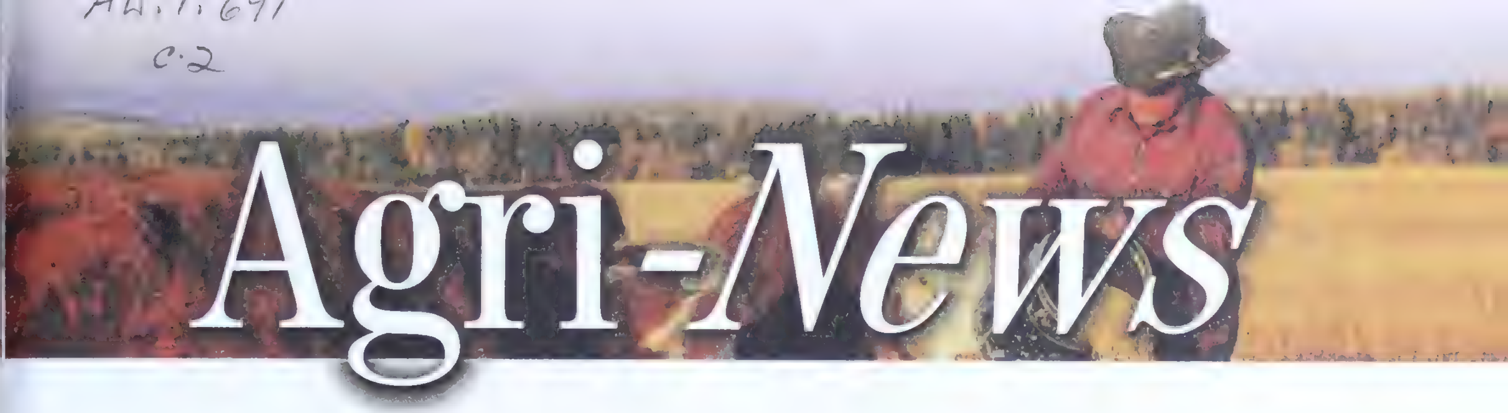

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October 8, 2001

Soil testing more important than ever

Producers who regularly soil test got a bit of a surprise this past year – available soil nitrogen was generally a lot higher than normal going into the 2001 crop year. In some areas, it was twice as high.

"The extended fall last year, with crops harvested early and freeze-up coming late, was the main reason for high nitrogen soil levels," says Doug Keyes, soil scientist with Norwest Labs, Scientific Services, Edmonton. "The time between the crop ceasing to take up nitrate and the temperature dropping to the point where soil microorganisms stopped mineralizing nitrogen was prolonged, so there was more time for nitrate to accumulate in the soil."

"In southern Alberta, the low crop yields in 2000 resulted in lower nutrient removal, which contributed to higher than normal soil nutrient levels in the spring," adds Dr. Ross McKenzie, senior research scientist – soil fertility/crop nutrition, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Agronomy Unit, Lethbridge.

For these reasons, the fall of 2000, soil samples tested higher than normal for nitrate. For those who held off and sampled instead in the spring, the story was similar.

During the winter, denitrification can deplete the residual nitrate present in fall, particularly if there is a heavy snow cover on moist soils, which is more common in central and northern Alberta. The snow insulates the soil, helping prevent it from freezing. Microorganisms responsible for denitrification function at very low temperatures (but not below freezing).

Last winter, however, there was very little snow in most areas of Alberta. When freezing temperatures did come, the soil froze quickly and froze to greater than normal depths as winter progressed. These conditions preserved the nitrate that had accumulated during fall, thus nitrate was carried through to spring.

In Alberta, all but some southern regions had spring tests that were actually higher than the fall tests. This is consistent with research results that show, typically, a 5 to 10 ppm difference depending on the time of fall sampling, early or late. Norwest Labs considers this approximate difference when recommending nitrogen fertilizer rates.

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Strategies for the coming year

What this fall will bring in the way of soil test results is anyone's guess, but, it can not be assumed that because it was a dry year there will be high nitrogen reserves in all fields - each field is different. Nor can it be assumed that because levels were high on a field last year they will be high again this year, nitrate levels can change dramatically and unpredictably from year to year.

Where N levels are relatively high, there is an opportunity to shift fertilizer dollars away from nitrogen to rebuild the soil's phosphorus and potassium reserves, or simply reduce input costs for next year.

"Soil testing will be as important this year as in any other, and for the same basic reason: it provides the information needed to allocate fertilizer efficiently and improve profitability," says McKenzie.

Contact: Ross McKenzie Doug Keyes
(403) 381-5842 (780) 438-5525 ext.239

New support for Alberta's livestock industry

A development fund managed by Alberta's own livestock associations will help keep one of the province's key industries healthy and competitive.

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development officially helped launch the Alberta Livestock Industry Development Fund (ALDIF) on October 1, 2001. The fund is aimed at supporting a wide range of research, marketing and education initiatives.

"This commitment from the Alberta government will support research and development in our livestock industry, which currently has a $17 billion impact on our economy," says McClellan. "Our provincial livestock industry needs to remain competitive in the global marketplace, leading the way with innovation and technology to ensure it is environmentally and socially responsive."

Managed by nine major livestock associations through a non-profit company, the fund is aimed at industry organizations, research and education institutions, and government agencies, companies and sole proprietors who help service and develop the Alberta livestock industry.

"The collaborative approach for research applications between the Alberta Livestock Industry Development Fund, the Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund, the Alberta Diversified Livestock Industry Development Fund and the Alberta Agricultural Research Institute helps streamline and manage our processes," adds McClellan. "We want to ensure efficient use of research and development funds and encourage partnerships on behalf of the industry and all Albertans."

ALIDF board members include Chair, Norman Kuntz from Strathmore; Vice-Chair, Bob Christie from Stavely; Secretary/ Treasurer Jack Moerman from Redwater; Don Sundgaard from Standard; and, Ed Oosterhof from Coaldale. Member associations include the Alberta Chicken Producers, Alberta Hatching Egg Producers, Alberta Egg Producers,

Alberta Turkey Producers, Alberta Milk Producers, Alberta Pork, the Alberta Cattle Commission, Alberta Cattle Feeders Association and the Western Stock Growers Association.

The $11-million Alberta Livestock Industry Development Fund is part of the 2001-2002 budget.

Funding through ALIDF's is intended to further the development of an environmentally and socially responsive livestock industry that is innovative, sustainable and recognized as a leader in national and international communities. This will be accomplished by supporting initiatives that build, develop, strengthen, and enhance the Alberta livestock industry with regards to:

- environmental issues and environmental sustainability
- quality assurance and food safety as well as the ability to manage, track and contain livestock disease outbreaks
- animal welfare issues
- marketing and value added development
- educating producers and the general public on any or all of the above issues
- communicating to the general public and consumers of Alberta livestock products on any or all of the above issues

The Fund is available to industry organizations, research and educational institutions, companies, government agencies and sole proprietorships that directly and/or indirectly participate in the service and development of the Alberta livestock industry.

For further information on the ALIDF and the application process go to <www.alidf.ca> or call Darcy Fitzgerald, operations manager, ALIDF at (780) 955-8340. The new ALIDF office is Suite 404, County Centre, 1101 – 5 Street, Nisku, Alberta.

Contact: Darcy Fitzgerald
Director of Communications
(780) 955-8340
Terry Willock
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 422 7683

Outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000 for toll-free connection.

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AFSC helps producers manage farm risk in 2000-2001

The Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) continued to meet the needs of Alberta's farmers by developing and delivering innovative business products and services during the 2000-2001 fiscal year.

AFSC's annual report, released by the Hon. Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, shows more than 10 million acres were covered by the AFSC crop insurance program. More than 5,900 farmers received income relief under the Farm Income Disaster Program (FIDP). As well, commercial financing helped facilitate $70.5 million in capital for agri-industry projects.

AFSC provides farmers and agribusinesses with unique financial and risk management tools, including crop and hail insurance, farm loans for beginning and developing farmers, commercial financing for the province's agri-food and value-added industries, as well as farm income disaster relief.

"Maintaining the viability of our farms and rural communities remains a priority for the provincial government," says McClellan. "Alberta's farmers and agribusiness owners face numerous challenges and opportunities. The growth in AFSC's products and services reflects the importance of providing them with relevant risk management tools and innovative financing options."

Following are highlights of the 2000-2001 AFSC annual report.

- More than 10 million acres covered under Crop Insurance. This is the greatest number of acres covered under the Crop Insurance program since 1993, with 8.2 million acres also protected by the Hail Endorsement rider. Total premiums collected for all insurance programs, including Forage and Straight Hail, totaled $152.9 million. Insurance claims paid out totaled $186.5 million.
- Farm lending rose by 11 per cent. Farm loan programs, including the Beginning Farmer Loan and the Alberta Farm Incomes Disaster Loan Program, increased over the previous year with 1,525 loans totaling $180.2 million.
- 5,900 farmers received disaster program aid. More than 5,900 Alberta farmers received income stabilization payments during 2000-2001. FIDP paid approximately $130 million primarily for the 1999 claim year and for claims reassessed due to a change in eligibility rules for the 1998 claim year.
- $70.5 million in financing facilitated for agri-industry projects. AFSC Commercial's innovative approach lowered the corporation's financial risk through the use of partnerships with alliance investors and financial institutions. Of the $70.5 million, partners provided more than 87.5 per cent of project costs, or $61.7 million.

"The corporation continues to improve its products and services, such as cash advance payments under crop insurance and the Farm Income Disaster Program, as well as through increased loan limits under the Beginning Farmer Program," says AFSC acting president Andrew Church.

AFSC is a crown corporation providing a broad range of financial and risk management services. It is governed by a Board of Directors and reports to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Contact: Andrew Church
(403) 782-8200

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

Alternative feeds for horses

The widespread drought in western Canada resulted in poor growing conditions for hay crops this summer. As a result, less hay was produced and prices have skyrocketed.

"Finding enough hay for the winter, and at a fair price, has become very difficult for many horse owners," says Lori Warren, PhD, PAS, provincial horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Thankfully, there are alternative feeds that can be used to extend your hay supply."

The following are some suggestions of feeds that can be used to replace some or all of the hay in a horse's diet:

Last year's hay crop – the mild winter may have left some producers with surplus hay produced from last year's crop. If properly stored, last year's hay should retain most of the nutrients it started with.

Hay cubes – often made of alfalfa, grass hay, peas and/or corn, hay cubes are an excellent alternative to hay. Hay cubes can be used to replace some or all of the hay and should be fed similarly to hay, by weight (so, if you fed 14 pounds of alfalfa, you would feed 14 pounds of alfalfa cubes).

Alfalfa pellets – pellets can serve as the only forage source if the horse is slowly adapted from hay to pellets. However, it is suggested that a small amount (five to seven pounds) of long-stemmed hay or straw also be provided.

Beet pulp – as a by-product of sugar beet processing, beet pulp is a very digestible source of fibre. Beet pulp can be used to replace up to half of the normal hay ration (seven to 10 pounds).

Haylage or silage – properly prepared haylage can be used to replace some or all of the hay in the diet. Good quality silage can replace one-third to one-half of the hay ration for horses. Do not feed spoiled haylage or silage to horses because they are much more sensitive to moulds.

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Green feed – oat and barley crops make excellent quality hay if the grains are harvested in the early-dough stage. However, quite often these crops are harvested for hay at a more mature stage because the grain crops failed. Harvesting at a more mature stage decreases the nutrient content. And in a drought year, green feed may have high nitrate levels. Do not use feeds with more than one per cent nitrate.

Straw – straw can be used to replace all of the hay, if the diet is properly supplemented with extra protein and minerals. However, straw is best used to replace only a portion of the hay and still significantly extends your hay supply. Oat straw is softer and tends to be more palatable to horses than wheat or barley straw. When feeding straw, always make sure your horse has an adequate source of water available to reduce the risk of impaction colic.

Pea straw – pea straw has received a lot of attention this season because it contains more protein and calcium than other straws. However, this extra protein may be bound by fibre, making it unavailable to the horse. Therefore, the nutrient content of pea straw should be considered similar to oat and wheat straw. Also, the course texture of pea straw may discourage some horses from eating it.

Swath grazing or grazing crop aftermath – many horse owners may be able to take advantage of swath grazing or allowing their horses to graze on crop aftermath. However, horses may not be able to gain as much nutrition from these sources as cattle, and they will likely have to be supplemented.

Grain – in general, grains are poor sources of fibre. However, when hay is scarce, we have the option of feeding more grain to replace some of the nutrition normally found in hay. As long as the horse receives at least one per cent of its body weight as forage, the rest can be replaced by grain. To avoid colic and laminitis, increase the level of grain slowly over two weeks and never feed more than five pounds of grain at a single feeding.

"The drought experienced in Alberta this year affected all crops, so be prepared for higher feed costs," adds Warren. "Do not attempt to save money by buying mouldy or poor quality feeds. This practice may be harmful to your horses, and cost you more in vet bills in the long run. Buy the best quality forage you can afford and supplement accordingly.

Contact: *Lori Warren*
(780) 415-6107

Spring flowering bulbs

The growing season is drawing to an end. Trees are setting winter bud and preparing for winter. Not only are the trees preparing for fall, the mail order flowering-bulb catalogues are arriving daily.

"In order to raise the most beautiful flowers, buy bulbs from a reliable dealer," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "There are many bulb selection tips. Here are some of the most important. Select bulbs for their size and firmness. Avoid bulbs with deep cuts, blemishes, or soft spots. The paper covering or tunic does not need to be intact on the bulb surface and if these are loose, the bulb surface can easily be looked at for marring on the surface. Bulbs store the energy that makes the flower, so the larger the bulb—the larger and more flowers will likely be produced. Bulbs for naturalizing do not have to be the biggest. Store bulbs prior to planting in a cool place like the refrigerator in paper or open plastic bags."

Any location in the yard will be suitable for bulb growing. Open and sunny is the best, but a little shade in the afternoon will increase the flowering period. Foundation plantings on the south and west sides can cause the forcing of bulb growth. Select later maturing bulbs for these locations. Bulbs can be used successfully in ribbon plantings along sidewalks, as accents in front of shrubs, rock gardens, and in naturalized plantings. For the most attractive and long-flowering, colourful results, combine bulbs in odd numbered masses, avoid straight soldier rows, plant later flowering bulbs with early flowering plants in the same spaces."Most bulbs hate wet feet, they prefer a well drained soil," adds Barkley. "The addition of peat moss, compost or humus will improve the water holding ability of a sandy soil, and the drainage of a clay soil. Dig the bed to a depth or 10 to 12 inches and incorporate bone meal or 11-52-0 fertilizer."

Plant bulbs as early in the fall as possible to allow for root establishment. Daffodils should be planted out in late August or early September as they require at least 10 days to set roots. Mulching late-planted bulbs before the ground freezes may buy some root establishment time. Mulching to a depth of five centimetres (two inches) after the ground has froze five cm (two in) deep prevents frost heaving of bulbs. Plant the bulbs five cm (two in) deeper than the recommended depth, this allows for the planting of annuals over top of the bulbs. Space large tulips five to six inches apart, and species tulips closer together. Dust the bulbs with a bulb dust to prevent disease and insect problems. Place the flat side of the bulb down, nose up, cover with soil and firm the soil. After planting, water the bed deeply. Bulbs left in place from year to year also need to be adequately watered in the fall, this allows good root establishment.

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"Once the plants poke through the ground in the spring, remove the mulch, and check the soil moisture levels," advises Barkley. "Dry soil will cause the blossoms to blast (fail to open). Bulbs need regular watering during the growing season, right up until the foliage starts to yellow, then gradually reduce the water until the leaves die."

After the flowers fade, cut them off with a sharp knife or scissors, leaving the flower stem with the leaves. Leave the foliage until it naturally dies back. Fertilize at the end of flowering with 10-30-10 or bulb fertilizer, this increases the food storage of the bulbs. Bulbs can be left in place for three to five years. Bulbs used for naturalizing will need to be lifted when their blossoms get smaller and smaller in number.

To increase the number of bulbs, rearrange the planting, or rejuvenate a crowded planting, lift and replant the planting. Bulbs can be lifted anytime after the foliage dies and falls over. They can be replanted immediately, or air-dried and stored in a warm, well-ventilated room. The plants can also be dug once flowering is finished and placed in a nursery area (heeled in). The foliage is left to mature, then dug, cleaned and stored.

For avid Alberta gardeners, Alberta Agriculture published ***Alberta Yards and Gardens***, a 225-page book filled with information about flowers, vegetables, herbs, trees, shrubs and grasses that grow best in Alberta's climate. The book is available at all Alberta Agriculture district offices and through the Publications Office at 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5B6. The cost of the publication is $15 plus GST. For phone or mail orders, please add $2 plus GST for shipping and handling.

Contact: *Shelley Barkley*
(403) 362-1305

Powdery mildew disease of Poinsettias

Recently, many growers of poinsettias have reported the presence of white powdery 'stuff' on the upper surface of plant leaves.

"This white powdery "stuff" is a symptom of a fungal disease called *Powdery Mildew*. This is a relatively new disease on poinsettias," says Dr. Piara Bains, plant pathologist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "Although this is one of the most easily recognizable diseases, the growers may miss it in the early stages of its development because the disease might start as small fungal colonies on the underside of lower leaves. Losses from this disease can be very significant, especially if the infection occurs on young leaves that colour to become bracts. The infected plant is rendered unsalable."

For optimal development of the disease both high and low humidity conditions are required. High humidity is favourable for initiation of the disease and low humidity and highly ventilated conditions are better for spread of the disease. The disease develops more rapidly under cooler conditions and greater day and night temperature.

"Growers must maintain a relative humidity of over 60 per cent to reduce the incidence of this disease," adds Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist at the Crop Diversification Centre North, Edmonton. "Recently, relative humidities of below 40 per cent have been recorded in many greenhouses. Care, however, should be taken that the humidity is not raised to the level that the conditions become conducive for the development of gray mold caused by *Botrytis* sp."

Bains adds, "Powdery mildews are specific in their host range, poinsettia powdery mildew will not spread to cucumbers or tomatoes. Sources of original infection of poinsettia powdery mildew are not known. It is possible that the spores of this fungus come with the original cuttings and remain dormant until suitable environmental conditions arise in the greenhouse or a weed is an alternate host. After all, we did not have powdery mildew on poinsettias till 1993."

One of the best preventative measurers against this disease is early detection and removal of infected leaves. The practice reduces the amount of pathogen available for further spread leading to infection of bracts. Scouting of poinsettia crop for powdery mildew is a very desirable management practice.

"Many cultural practices should also be watched in context of powdery mildew," says Mirza. "If your watering practices include much dry regimes whereby plants are allowed to slightly wilt, then expect more powdery mildew to develop. If you have been using very high levels of ammonium based fertilizers and leaf growth is soft, then powdery mildew will be more prevalent. The focus for growers should be on maintaining proper environment so that relative humidity is in the proper range."

In addition to removal of infected leaves, a fungicide program should be initiated immediately. There are at least two fungicides registered for control of this disease. Before using the fungicides, however, check the label to assess its suitability and proper method of application.

Contact: *Piara Bains* *Mohyuddin Mirza*
(780) 415-2302 *(780) 415-2303*

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Energizing the family farm

Energizing the Family Farm is a conference designed to encourage farm families to look at innovative production models to develop sustainable and profitable farms. The conference is being held at the Camrose Regional Exhibition, Camrose, on November 8, 2001. This one-day conference, sponsored by Sunworks Farm, offers a variety of sessions on holistic management, globalization and the family farm, production methods, and family friendly farming. The keynote speaker is Joel Salatin, Swoope, Virginia. The Salatin farm is internationally known for its creative farming methods. Salatin, a dynamic speaker, will share his experience and renew the audience's enthusiasm for farming and for life. Registration cost for the conference is $80.25 per person (includes GST, lunch and banquet). On November 9, 2001, following the conference, a Relationship Marketing workshop will be held at the same venue. The workshop is designed to help farmers who would like to direct market products to the consumer or place products in stores and restaurants. Salatin will share his techniques in direct marketing into stores and 'white table' restaurants. Registration cost for the marketing workshop is $64.20 (includes GST and lunch). Registration deadline is November 1, 2001. For more information contact Sunworks Farm (780) 672-9799, Armena, AB, or call toll free 1-877-393-3133.

Banff Pork Seminar

Leading the Way is the theme of the 2002 Banff Pork Seminar. The seminar is being held in Banff on January 22 to 25, 2002. The key pork industry issues being examined at the 2002 seminar are: Future strategies for Canadian pork; Who wants to buy my pork?; disease disasters – who will be next? Sessions topics range from new breeding technologies, troubleshooting production, eliminating disease, growing without antibiotics to protecting farm worker health and safety. A session on specialized pigs for specialized markets is also being offered. For further information or to register, contact Banff Pork Seminar (780) 492-3236, fax (780) 492-9130 or e-mail <bps@afns.ualberta.ca>.

Harvest celebration

Growing Alberta, a public communications program, is heading a week-long celebration of Alberta's agriculture and food industry during Agriculture and Food Week, October 8 to 14, 2001. Events throughout the province are being held to note the significance of the industry and the vital benefits it offers Alberta's economy, quality of life and the environment. The industry, including sectors such as primary production, food processing, distribution, R&D, retail and foodservice, impacts one of every three jobs in Alberta. Food processing is Alberta's largest manufacturing sector, accounting for almost $8 billion of Alberta's economy. Add that to shipments of over $6 billion from the primary sector and the total industry creates over $13 billion in economic activity. In celebration of the industry, each year during Agriculture and Food Week, new members are inducted onto Growing Alberta's Green Team to honor exemplary responsible stewardship in all sectors. Growing Alberta is supported by industry and government sponsorship. Started in 1996, the program promotes the industry's commitment to air, soil, and water quality and food quality and safety. Agriculture and Food Week is part of a National Agriculture and Food Awareness Month. For further information, contact Ron Brown, executive director, Growing Alberta, (780) 955-3714.

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Agri-News

October 15, 2001

Deadline approaches for farm acreage payment programs and irrigation program

Application deadlines for two farm income assistance programs are fast approaching. Farmers applying for the $10.29 per acre payment on cultivated land farmed in the year 2000 and the $4 per acre payment on native forage in 2001 programs have until **October 31, 2001**.

The $10.29 acreage payment, or the ***Canada-Alberta Farm Income Assistance Program*** (CAFIAP), was announced on April 27, 2001 to help farmers deal with high input costs and low commodity prices. The provincial and federal governments jointly fund the program.

On June 1, 2001, severe drought conditions prompted the provincial government to announce assistance for Alberta's livestock and honey producers. Alberta producers are eligible for $4 per acre through the native forage component of the ***Farm Income Assistance Program*** 2001 (FIAP 2001) and $4 per operational hive in 2001 under the honey component.

To date, more than $200 million has been paid out through CAFIAP to about 33,000 applicants and about $20 million has been paid out through the FIAP 2001 – Native Forage component.

The deadline for the ***Agricultural Irrigation Rebate Program*** is also **October 31, 2001**. All irrigators with non-rate coded natural gas meters, propane or diesel must complete an application form to receive this rebate.

"We recognize that farmers are extremely busy right now," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "But, we want to make sure that every eligible producer is aware that the deadline is fast approaching and that they should get their applications in as soon as possible."

Producers can obtain forms for CAFIAP, FIAP 2001 and the Irrigation Rebate program at any Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development district office. Information is also available on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca> or by calling Program Services at (780) 422-9167.

Contact: *John Knapp* *(780) 422-9167*

Terry Willock *(780) 422-7683*

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Alberta pork exports to Mexico

Alberta's pork exports to Mexico have been showing some growth over the past few years. The market looks brighter for the future with tariffs to be removed in 2003, under NAFTA. "Alberta pork may be on Mexican plates whether processed in Alberta or in neighboring provinces," says Marcia O'Connor, Mexico-Latin America trade director with Alberta Economic Development, Edmonton.

"Only about 60 per cent of Alberta's 3.5 million hog production is processed in Alberta," says Darren Chase, livestock market analyst with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "The remainder moves out of province to processing facilities in western Canada and the United States."

In May 2001, Canada Pork International (CPI) partnered with the Canada Beef Export Federation (CBEF) on a technical seminar with product sampling in Mexico City. These organizations share common meat buyers, and the partnering served both organizations' members well. Following the seminar in Mexico City, CPI held a similar function in Monterrey.

Jacques Pomerleau, executive director with CPI, comments, "We've heard from our Mexican contacts that the seminar was very much appreciated and that those in attendance learned much new information about the safety and the attributes of our respective products. As a result, we are planning another series of seminars with CBEF for May 2002."

Pork market in Mexico

Mexico's per capita consumption of pork is 11.5 kg, about half of the per capita beef consumption of 23.2 kg. In 2000, Mexico's pork production was 1,035,000 MT (carcass weight equivalent).

Some imported pork sold in Mexico goes to processors for the making of ham, delicatessen meats and frankfurters. The market for these products has been growing; however, some processors are substituting poultry products for pork.

Supermarkets are increasing their share of imported pork products. Many of the supermarkets cater to higher income consumers and their stores are as modern as Canadian stores. Large retail chains are often well set up to import.

Alberta companies must have a Mexican importer (or representative) registered with the Secretary of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) in order to export to Mexico.

Canada/Alberta pork exports

Canada's pork exports to Mexico totaled $33.9 million in 2000, Alberta accounted for 13 per cent of that value amounting to $4.5 million. Overall, Canada's exports to Mexico in the first half of 2001 have grown over 50 per cent compared with the first half of 2000.

Currently, Mexico is Alberta's third largest export market for pork. The first half of 2001 has shown a 100 per cent increase over the same six months of 2000. To June 30, Alberta exported $3.3 million of pork to Mexico. When looking at quantity, Alberta exported 1,000 tonnes in 1998; 2,508 tonnes in 1999; and 2,405 tonnes in 2000.

Contact: *Marcia O'Connor*
(780) 422-1762

Plant evaluation research in Alberta

A top research priority for the Nursery Trades Industry in Alberta is the evaluation of new plant material for adaptation to the environmental conditions of Alberta. This is not an easy task when one considers the many variations in conditions from north to south and east to west in the province. There are few trees considered good to ideal for landscape and boulevard use in Alberta compared to other parts of Canada. This research allows for the constant search for more and better selections to increase the variety of trees in use in the province. The Nursery Crops Research Group, at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centres South and North (CDCS and CDCN), is actively pursuing the questions of the new plant hardiness and landscape quality through a number of plant evaluation trials.

The Regional Woody Plant Test Project (RWPTP), a cooperative effort with the Landscape Alberta Nursery Trades Association (LANTA) Growers Group, began in 1983. In 2001, new trees and shrubs selections were planted at CDCN, CDCS, Fairview College, as well as at nursery sites in Coaldale, Calgary and Red Deer. These plantings are providing data on the performance of the plants in many of the different climatic regions of the province. Data are collected on each plant over a five-year period.

"The new tree and shrub selections mostly come from across North America, from selections made at private nurseries or from plant breeding programs," says Christine Murray Ph.D., nursery crops specialist at Alberta Agriculture's CDCS, Brooks. "In 2001, Regal Prince Bur Oak, Tinkerbelle Lilac, Sabre Poplar, Millstream Apple, Midnight Schubert Chokecherry, Honey Rose Honeysuckle and Madonna Elder were planted into the trial. But don't expect to see these plants at your local garden centre or nursery for some time yet. While they are in the trial, growers may chose plants with potential and begin to increase their numbers in the nursery so, when data are available in five years, the nurseries will have sufficient numbers of the plants to serve the marketplace."

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The trial pushes the limit of hardiness for trees and shrubs. Plants that fail in the trial are considered not hardy in Alberta and are not recommended in some or all areas of the province. In 1995, Autumn Magic Aronia, Bergeson Green Ash, Jordan Green Ash, Royal Beauty Crabapple, Bosnian Pine, Foothills Mayday, Flower Carpet Rose, Summer Glow Tamarisk, and Green Spire American Linden were planted. In 2000, these plants graduated from the trial; however, only Jordan Green Ash was recommended at all sites after five years of evaluation. Bergeson Green Ash sustained winter damage in several locations. The Autumn Magic Aronia survived well and had good landscape qualities only at CDCN, CDCS and in Calgary.

A great deal of data has been collected since 1983 on approximately 190 trees and shrubs. This information has been published on Alberta Agriculture's web site at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/crops/trees/rwptp/index.html>. The information is also available in hardcopy from CDCS and can be obtained by contacting Shelley Barkley, information officer at CDCS, Brooks, (403) 362-1305.

While the RWPTP has been ongoing since 1983, the Prairie Regional Trials (PRT), a tree and shrub evaluation trial currently coordinated by Dr. Campbell Davidson, at the Agriculture and Agri-Food, Morden Research Station, began testing plant materials at CDCS in 1958. The plants in the PRT trial are evaluated at eight sights across the Prairies for a five-year period. Plants for the PRT's are often advanced selections from the breeding program at Morden. Northern Treasure and Northern Gem ash selections, Snow Beauty, Hope for Humanity and Morden Sunrise rose selections are all recent introductions from breeding programs at Morden that were evaluated in the PRT. Other selections from other sources: private nurseries or other breeding programs have also been part of the PRT's at CDCS. The PRT information is posted on the internet at the Morden Research Centre site <http://res2.agr.ca/winnipeg/prt59_98.htm>.

"The Herbaceous Perennial Trial Garden, a cooperative project with the Calgary Zoo, the LANTA Retail Operators Commodity Group, CDCS and partially funded through the Alberta Agriculture Research Institute On-farm Demonstration Program is the newest plant evaluation trial," adds Murray. "The garden, located at the Calgary Zoo, has evaluated over 150 herbaceous perennial selections and cultivars for the past three years. Perennials are a rapidly changing and growing part of the nursery industry with many new selections being introduced each year. Nursery, landscape and retail professionals require more information about the types of plants that will grow, survive and have good landscape quality in Alberta and the home gardener is interested in new plants to add to the garden. The Zoo provided an excellent location to collect data on the perennials while being in a public location and easily accessible to the public and professionals alike. The final data is being collected in the trial garden now. The technical and popular documents are being created and will be available in November. The project has been so successful, an expanded program at three Alberta sites is planned for the spring 2002."

Plant evaluation trials have made a very important contribution to the nursery trades industry in Alberta for more than 40 years by providing data on new selections that may become important trees and shrubs in the Prairie landscape.

Contact: *Christine Murray*
(403) 362-1313
Fax: (403) 362-1360
Email: <christine.murray@gov.ab.ca>

Alberta Horticultural Congress

With 60 technical sessions and approximately 220 trade show booths, the Alberta Horticultural Congress and Prairie West Trade Show will be of particular interest to professional growers this year. The Hort Congress is being held at the Mayfield Inn on November 8 to 10, 2001, and the Prairie West Trade Show is held in conjunction with the Congress on November 8 and 9.

"The international slate of speakers scheduled for this year's Congress will be covering topics such as greenhouse trends and research; growing tips and pointers; and, adding value to hort crops," says Shirley Alton, Congress coordinator, Edmonton. "Crops being discussed include all greenhouse crops, vegetables, berries, poinsettias, impatiens, herbs and fruits."

The list of presenters at the 2001 Hort Congress include:

- Tom Papadopoulos, lead scientist, Greenhouse and Processing Crops Research Centre, Harrow, ON
- Brian Minter, Minters Gardens, Chilliwack, BC
- Margery Daughtrey, senior extension association, Cornell University, New York, NY
- Karl Batschke, director of North American Production, Ogilvee Ltd., Connisville, PA
- Anita Schreyer, Down to Earth Greenhouses, Alberta
- Dr. Ken Fry, Alberta Research Council, Alberta
- Jean Channon Simpson, instructor, Mt. Royal College, Calgary
- Wes Johnson, vegetable technician, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

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- Paul Ragan, vegetable specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Lloyd Hausher, fruit specialist, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Dominic Rivard, winemaker, Fort Langley, BC

For further information or registration, contact Alton (780) 415-2324. Information is also available on the internet at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/conference/hortcongress.html>.

Contact: *Shirley Alton*
(780) 415-2324

Alberta woodlot needs assessment

Do you know the value of your woodlot/bush? – that is the question woodlot specialists are trying to answer using a Woodlot Needs Assessment.

"Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's woodlot extension program is launching a needs assessment this fall," says Toso Bozic, sustainable woodlot specialist at Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "All woodlot owners and woodlot managers are invited to participate. A brochure containing details and a brief survey are available at your local office of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, as well as on-line on the Alberta Agriculture web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/navigation/sustain/vegetation/index.html>. When you fill out the brochure you can drop it off at one of Alberta Agriculture's offices, mail it, fax it or submit it on-line."

Why conduct a woodlot needs assessment?

The Woodlot Extension Program is currently developing its programs and services for this winter programming season and for the long term. The information collected through this needs assessment will be used to develop and improve programs and services for woodlot owners and managers. Your assistance in identifying your current needs as woodlot owners and woodlot managers is very important in designing and developing a more beneficial program.

How can you benefit from filling out the assessment?

When you fill out and return the assessment form, your woodlot specialist will send you an information package related to your goals and interests. As well, you will be informed about the dates, times and locations of workshops and demonstration tours that will be held in your area.

Another benefit is that the services and programs developed by this Program will provide better responses to the needs in individual areas. Individuals can help that happen by encouraging their neighbors to complete the survey. This will help to give a more complete picture of the needs in an area. Those needs will be used as the basis for workshops and tours.

What is the Woodlot Extension Program?

The Woodlot Extension Program is a new program in Alberta. It was established in December 2000 as a partnership between government, conservation organizations and the forest industry.

The goals of the Woodlot Extension Program are:

- increased awareness of economic and environmental implications of agriculture area forest management
- increased landowner participation in sustainable woodlot management
- encourage integrated community land use planning

"The Program is working to develop sustainable woodlot management in Alberta with the cooperation and involvement of landowners and land managers, as well as Municipalities and Counties," adds Bozic.

If you want to help the program to serve you better, please fill out the assessment and return it to your woodlot specialist.

For more information on woodlot and agroforestry please contact Bozic at (780) 415-2618 or e-mail >toso.bozic@gov.ab.ca>. Mailing address is:

CDCN RR 6 17507 Fort Road Edmonton, AB T5B 4K3

Contact: *Toso Bozic*
(780) 415-2618

Fall yard care

The sound of the geese and the change in the leaf color means that fall is here again. Spending some time in the yard now pay big dividends next year.

"The tops of most of the herbaceous perennials can be cut off or left standing with the exception of peonies, iris and lilies which need to have the tops cut back," says Shelley Barkley, information officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS), Brooks. "There are pros and cons to whether a gardener leaves the perennial tops for winter. The removal helps prevent the overwintering of diseases and insects, while leaving this material can help hold a snow cover during the winter, and it can be attractive."

Newly planted perennials benefit from a mulch of clean material, such as straw or dry grass and leaves mixed together. Apply the mulch after the ground has frozen. Mulching now will help prevent the plants from being forced from the ground. Use stakes to mark the plants that need to be moved and divided early in the spring.

"Mulch the strawberry patch when the temperature drops to -7 C and stays there for three or four nights," says Barkley. "Water the plants well, then cover with weed free straw or a grass and leaf mixture. Watering lightly after applying the

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mulch will help hold it in place. A mulch layer, five centimetres deep after settling, will keep the plants safe. Watch for signs of mice during the winter and treat as necessary."

The wintering of tea roses begins in the summer. Stop fertilizing the plants at the end of July, and in August, cut roses with shorter stems. Cut back the water in September, but never let the plants dry out. After several hard frosts, the winter insulation should be put in place. Water the plants well, head the canes back to 20 to 25 cm. Put about 30 cm of insulating material, such as peatmoss, compost or soil, around the canes and the crown, but do not pack the material too tightly.

"Cutting back the water to woody plants and perennials should have started in August. The early start aids the plants in preparing for winter," adds Barkley. "It is important to have a reserve of moisture in the root zone for all plants in the yard to prevent root damage during the winter. Fill the soil profile with water in mid-October or just before the ground freezes."

Raking the leaves tidies the yard and removes overwintering sites for many insects and diseases. The dried leaves can be stock piled for adding to next years compost pile.

"Since winter can fade the memories of the summer, make a few notes for next year, what worked, what did not and what to try for next year," advises Barkley.

Alberta Agriculture's ***Alberta Yards and Gardens***, a 225-page book, is filled with information for Alberta gardeners. Sections dealing specifically with flowers, vegetables, herbs, trees, shrubs and grasses that grow best in Alberta's climate, make this book a quick easy reference when planning and maintaining yards and gardens. The book is available at all Alberta Agriculture district offices and through the Publications Office at 7000 – 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5B6. The cost of the publication is $15 plus GST. For phone or mail orders, please add $2 plus GST for shipping and handling.

Contact: Shelley Barkley
(403) 362-1305
e-mail: shelley.barkley@gov.ab.ca

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Agricultural Financial Management 2002

Four Agricultural Financial Management 2002 workshops are being held throughout Alberta in November 2001 and early 2002. Workshop participants will have an opportunity to prepare and interpret a balance sheet, accrued income and expense statement, a projected cash flow statement, and financial ratios for a case study farm. This hands-on experience gives attendees a chance to learn to use agricultural financial management statements, terms, ratios, benchmarks, and concepts. This three-day workshop uses the new, user-friendly Agricultural Business Analyzer (ABA) computer software tool. The four sessions are:

November 5 to 7, 2001	Olds
January 15 to 17, 2002	Camrose
January 28 to 30, 2002	Taber
February 12 to 14, 2002	Fairview

Registration cost for the workshop is $150 per person (plus GST). Two people per farm are welcome, however, they must work at the same computer. To register, call (403) 556-4240. For further information, contact Ron Lyons, financial management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Olds, at (403) 556-4236; Dann Mattson, agricultural management specialist, Alberta Agriculture, at (403) 556-4248; or, Gordon Williams, farm management consultant with Alberta Agriculture at (403) 330-3031. Laptop computers, pre-loaded with the ABA program, will be provided for participants' use during the workshop.

Swine tech workshop

The third annual ***Swine Technology Workshop*** is being held at the Harvest Centre, Westerner Agriplex in Red Deer on October 31 and November 1, 2001. The theme of the workshop this year is ***Value Maximization in the Grow-Finish Herd and Breeding Herd***. On October 31, topics include measuring feed intake, measuring lean growth rate, setting targets and feeding strategies, as well as other timely topics of discussion. On the second day, presentations and discussion will focus on the breeding herd and specifically farrowing management. Registration for the workshop is $50 per person per day or $75 for both days. Cheques made out to Swine Technology Workshop can be sent to:

Swine Technology Workshop
#204, 7000 - 113 Street
Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

For more information about the workshop, contact Michelle Follinsbee, pork technology transfer specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton, (780) 415-0828 or Jim Gowans at (403) 318-6599. This program is sponsored by Alberta Pork and many businesses that serve the pork industry.

Rural Crime Watch defies terrorism

As simplistic as it may seem, the Rural Crime Watch (RCW) groups throughout Alberta are doing and have for years been doing consistent vigilance over activities occurring in rural Alberta. "There are no other voluntary organizations any where in western Canada that consistently watch over our land like RCW," states Farmers' Advocate Dean Lien. In a province that is highly developed industrially, there are few places that don't have a highly technical development somewhere in the forefront, and these facilities are a part of our rural landscape. Daily watching over this are our rural farmers and ranchers. They are better able to recognize, investigate and report questionable activities in these rural areas. Rural Crime Watch, with more than 25000 volunteer members, provides a security system that cannot be duplicated or improved by legislation or regimentation. All Albertans benefit from this security system that was organized originally to deter vandalism and livestock rustling. The next time you are driving through the country and you see a ***Rural Crime Watch*** area sign, remember that there are volunteers devoting their time and efforts to provide a safer and more secure place to live. For further information, contact Dean Lien, (780) 427-2433. Toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000 and then the number.

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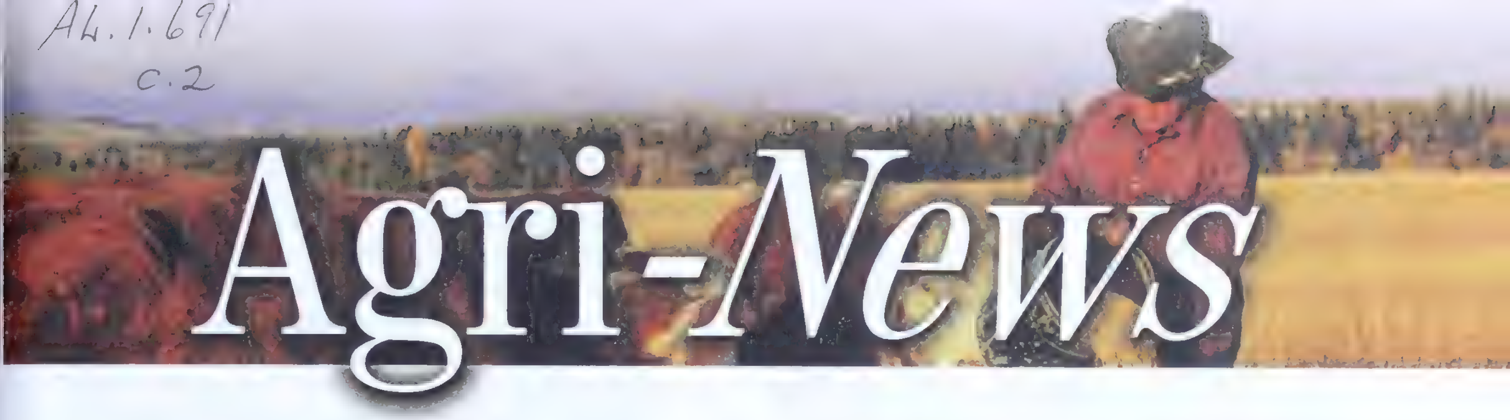

Agri-News

October 22, 2001

Cattle wintering sites

Manure is a valuable source of nutrients for growing crops on the farm. However, manure also contains nutrients, organic matter and microorganisms that can contaminate water sources.

"In some areas, a fairly common practice for cattle producers is to feed and bed cattle in low sheltered areas beside creeks, rivers, lakes or dugouts," says Bob Buchanan, agricultural water specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Leduc. "However, manure accumulation at these sites can contribute contaminated runoff to these water sources during spring snowmelt or heavy rainfall events. Cattle with unrestricted access to water sources can contaminate them with manure and sediment trampled in from the stream banks. Cattle that are allowed continuous access to streams for watering and grazing will eventually destroy all the rooted vegetation along the stream banks, and that can lead to serious stream bank erosion by water. The sediment deteriorates water quality and riparian habitat for fish and other aquatic life. Some Alberta studies have shown that even small cow-calf operations with fewer than 50 cow-calf pairs can impact water quality."

Nutrients, such as phosphorus from manure, can rapidly increase the algal growth in dugouts, lakes and rivers. For example, there is enough phosphorus in the manure from one cow in one day to cause a significant algal bloom in one million litres of dugout water. When algae die and decompose, dissolved oxygen in the water can be depleted and cause fish kills. Decomposing algae can also generate offensive taste and odor problems in water. Blue green algal toxins can be fatal to livestock. Manure itself creates a large biological oxygen demand on water, as one cow's manure from one day can deplete all the dissolved oxygen in 30,000 litres of water.

"Water sources contaminated with manure contain faecal coliform bacteria and may have other disease-causing microorganisms such as cryptospiridium and giardia," adds Buchanan. "These microorganisms are a threat to public health and reduce weights and cattle productivity."

Several factors influence the management and environmental suitability of a cattle wintering site. Some physical characteristics, such as slope, soil type, water table and

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climate, are beyond the producers control. Other factors that can be managed include cattle density, runoff control, feeding method and location of water supply. Whenever possible, try to pick a wintering site away from water sources, where little or no runoff flows down through the site. Also set up an alternative water supply to protect the water source.

Alberta cattle producers now have another tool to help them manage their farms and ranches in an environmentally sustainable manner. ***Cattle Wintering Sites - Managing for Good Stewardship*** (Agdex # 420/580-2) is a new publication providing practical advice on evaluating and managing cattle wintering sites. ***Cattle Wintering Sites*** gives producers information about identifying and managing potential problems with wintering sites. Factors such as precipitation, slope, drainage ground cover, water supply, feeding and bedding strategies are reviewed. The focus is on common sense and practical solutions that are effective and economical for cattle producers. The publication acknowledges that every wintering site is unique and that beneficial management practices will differ from site to site. The intent of the booklet is to help producers find the strategies that work in their individual situations. It does not refer to any existing or proposed legislation, therefore, it should be noted that any diversion of water needs to be addressed by Alberta Environment to ensure proper permitting is obtained. ***Cattle Wintering Sites*** was developed in partnership with the Alberta Cattle Commission, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration. It is available free of charge to all Alberta cattle producers at all Alberta Agriculture's district offices. It is also available from the Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

Cattle Wintering Sites is also available in PDF format on the Alberta Agriculture web site. It can be downloaded from the following site: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/sustain/cattlewintering.html>.

For further information, Karen Yakimishyn, provincial agrologist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton, (403) 782-3301.

Contact:	*Bob Buchanan*	*Karen Yakimishyn*
	(780) 986-8985	*(403) 782-3301*

Test feed for fusarium

Producers should test feed for fusarium to avoid health problems in livestock. With winter's approach, many livestock owners may have to increase their imports of feed grains from outside the province. Feed coming to Alberta from outside the province could be contaminated by *Fusarium graminearum*, a fungus that causes Fusarium head blight (FHB).

"Current grain varieties have little to no resistance to fusarium," says Dr. Ieuan Evans, research scientist, plant pathology, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "FHB infection may result in yield losses, lower grades, rejection of barley for malt status and a reduced quality of feed and food produced from infected grain, resulting in millions of dollars in losses each year, as is the case in Manitoba. Alberta is relatively *F. graminearum* free and we need to keep it that way."

Fusarium graminearum infected grain can cause health problems for livestock and can produce toxic metabolites known as mycotoxins. *F. graminearum* is known to produce mycotoxins such as deoxynivalenol (DON) and zearalenone (ZEA) that have negative health effects on livestock affecting reproduction and weight gain.

DON is irritating to the skin and membranes of the mouth and stomach. The toxic effects of DON mimic radiation and targets cells with high metabolic or reproduction rates. The most significant target tissues are the immune system and rapidly reproducing cells that line the stomach. Depression of the immune system occurs causing an increase in infectious diseases and a decrease in vaccine-induced protection occurring after DON poisoned animals are vaccinated. One common observation of infected grain is feed refusal, as DON is very irritating and damaging to the mouth. Pigs often vomit after eating DON contaminated grain, which is why the toxin is commonly known as - vomitoxin.

Zearalenone is a nonsteroidal estrogenic substance, and symptoms include exaggeration of the biological effects of estrogen. Cows and heifers may have signs of estrous and may be in non-fertile 'standing heat'. Pigs are very sensitive to zearalenone and swelling and relaxation of the anus and vulva can result in prolapse of both the rectum and vagina.

Coughing greatly increases the occurrence of prolapses. Sows may abort or have 'dumbbell' piglets. Pigs are more sensitive than cattle to mycotoxins in *F. graminearum* infected grain.

There are recommended levels of mycotoxin for livestock feeds. Generally accepted safe exposure levels are:

- 1 part per million (ppm) DON for finished grain products for human consumption
- Cattle over four months old: 10 ppm DON (providing grain at that level doesn't exceed 50 per cent of diet)
- Poultry: 10 ppm DON (providing grain at that level doesn't exceed 50 per cent of diet)
- Swine: 5 ppm DON (not to exceed 20 per cent of ration, i.e. 1 ppm.)
- All other animals: 5 ppm DON (providing grains do not exceed 40 per cent of diet, i.e. 2 ppm.)
- Zearalenone levels for most livestock species should be below 0.2 to 0.5 ppm.

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Processing feeds does not reduce DON and ZEA levels. Blending feeds reduces the level of mycotoxins by dilution. Some seed parts may be high in mycotoxins and separating these seed parts will concentrate the mycotoxins.

To avoid health problems due to fusarium-infected feed, livestock feeders are encouraged to test all feed grain being brought into the province from other regions in Canada and the U.S. Tests can be done to identify *F. graminearum* and levels of mycotoxins. This will allow feeders to evaluate the level of toxicity in their feed and whether it is safe to feed to livestock. This evaluation should include all cereal grains including corn. Contact a private laboratory to discuss feed grain testing.

Farmers should contact their local Agriculture Service Board or contact Alberta Agriculture for more information. Information can be found on Alberta Agriculture's web site <www.agric.gov.ab.ca> and the Canadian Grain Commission web site <www.cgc.ca>. A veterinarian or a plant pathologist can also be contacted for information.

Contact: *Dr. Ieuan Evans*
(780) 422-0719

Joe Kendall, DVM
(780) 427-8389

R. W. Coppock, DVM, PhD
(780) 632-8304

SSM - business opportunities for agrologists

Site specific management (SSM) of crops can provide farmers and agri-businesses with new opportunities to improve profitability. Customizing farm inputs according to variability in growing conditions offers the opportunity to fine-tune management practices. Fine-tuning management can provide important and cost effective ways to improve crop production and preserve soil and water quality.

"Providing accurate information services as well as crop inputs such as seed, fertilizer and pesticides are important aspects of many retail businesses," says Kathy Reid, conservation technologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vegreville. "Many producers are using some of the SSM tools such as global positioning systems to assist in yield mapping, locating benchmark soil sampling sites and to guide spraying operations. As more and more farmers collect soil and crop data, there will be a greater demand for knowledgeable people to accurately interpret the growing amount of information, and transform it into profitable knowledge."

Site specific management also offers opportunities in the area of crop diagnostics. Yield maps are another SSM tool that can be used to help identify areas of low productivity. In some cases, poor crop growth can be associated with a soil related problem, which can be mapped with the help of a geographic information system (GIS). Identifying areas of low organic matter, low fertility or high salt content, an agronomist can assist the producer in developing a plan to correct the problem. Using SSM to map out areas of low organic matter in a field, a producer could apply manure or compost on a site-specific basis.

Agri-businesses can learn more about these exciting opportunities by attending the ***Site Specific Management - Keys to the Future*** conference at the Mayfield Inn in Edmonton from December 11 to 12, 2001. In addition to plenary sessions on topics such as *Business Information Management*, *GPS* and *Environmental Issues*, the conference will have three concurrent sessions devoted to industry, producer and municipal aspects of SSM. Continuing Education credits for the Certified Crop Advisor program are available throughout the conference. A tradeshow with the latest SSM equipment and software is being featured, as well as a poster session on the latest SSM research results, and an interactive session featuring demonstrations of GPS and GIS equipment.

Further information about the conference agenda, speaker biographies, tradeshow, CCA/CEU credits and registration information can be found on-line at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/conference/ssm>. Registration packages are also available at all Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development offices. For more information about the conference, contact Sheilah Nolan, research agrologist with Alberta Agriculture at (780) 427-3719 or Jack Payne at (403) 507-7940. For information on being a trade show participant, contact Carrie Selin at (780) 427-3587.

Contact: *Kathy Reid*
(780) 632-5467

Dig up one bulb - plant another

Fall is the time to for digging up and storing tender plants such as gladiolus, dahlias and begonias. If cured and stored properly, these plants can provide many years of enjoyment.

The gladiolus corm should be dug after the green leaves have changed colour, this lets the corms develop and mature. Dig and lay out the corms on the ground in the sun for an afternoon. Cut the tops back to about 5 cm above the corm top, and store warm and dry (25-30°C.). After two to three weeks the old corm will break off the new one easily. Break them off, and remove any soil left on the corms. Dust them with a bulb dust and store them in shallow trays, paper bags or old onion bags. Storing at a temperature of 4°C will help to control thrips. Acidanthera, that produce white or purple flowers with dark centres, are related to gladiolus and should be treated the same way.

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"After a killing frost, cut the dahlia tops back leaving 10 cm of stem above the soil," says Shelley Barkley, information officer at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre South, Brooks. "Wait as long as possible before digging up the tubers, but get this done before hard freeze that can injure the roots in the soil. After lifting, turn the clumps of roots upside down to let the water drain from the stems. Remove the soil from around the roots, trying not to damage them. Roots broken from the basal stem (crown) can not be saved for replanting next year. Dust the tubers with bulb dust and store in slightly moistened vermiculite at 4°C until April. Check the tubers once in a while to make sure they are not too dry, if so, sprinkle the vermiculite with water. The trick to successfully storing the tubers is to keep them damp enough not to shrivel, but dry enough not to sprout. Another way to store the tubers is to dig them up and leave the garden soil intact around the roots. When this soil begins to dry and crack, sprinkle it with water. Store them at 4°C. This works best in clay loam soils that do not fall apart when they get dry."

Dig begonias after the first frost, leaving as much soil on them as possible and leave the tops intact. Store them for three weeks until the tops are easily broken off. Clean the tubers, dust with a bulb dust and pack in slightly moistened peat moss or vermiculite. Store the tubers at 4 to 10°C until March or April when they can be started again.

Cut Canna tops off to the ground after frost has damaged them. Dig the tubers and turn them upside down for a few hours to dry. Gather up the tubers and lay them out in an airy room to cure for several days. Pack into boxes of slightly moistened sand or vermiculite to prevent the tubers from drying and shrinking. Store cool at 4°C, remember to check for drying and sprinkle the sand if necessary.

"To raise the most beautiful tulips, crocus or other spring-flowering bulbs, buy bulbs from a reliable dealer," says Barkley. "Select bulbs for size and firmness. Avoid bulbs with deep cuts, blemishes, or soft spots. The paper covering or tunic doesn't need to be intact on the bulb surface. If these are loose, the bulb surface can easily be looked at for marring on the surface. Bulbs store energy, this energy makes the flower. The larger the bulb - the larger and more flowers it produces. Bulbs for naturalizing do not have to be the biggest. Prior to planting, store bulbs in a cool place such as the refrigerator in paper or open plastic bags."

Any location in the yard is suitable for bulb growing. Open and sunny is the best, but a little shade in the afternoon will increase the flowering period. Foundation plantings on the south and west sides can cause forcing of bulb growth. Select later maturing bulbs for these locations. Bulbs can be used successfully in ribbon plantings along sidewalks, as accents in front of shrubs, rock gardens, and in naturalized plantings. Combine in odd numbered masses, avoiding straight soldier rows, planting later flowering spring bulbs with early flowering plants in the same spaces will mean colour all spring long.

"Most of the spring bulbs hate wet feet, they prefer a well drained soil," adds Barkley. "The addition of peat moss, compost or humus will improve the water holding ability of a sandy soil, and the drainage of a clay soil. Dig the bed to a depth or 10 to 12 inches and incorporate bone meal or 11-52-0 fertilizer."

Plant bulbs as early in the fall as possible to allow for root establishment (daffodils in late August or early September). They require at least 10 days to set roots. Mulching late-planted bulbs before the ground freezes may buy some root establishment time. Mulching to a depth of 5 cm (2 in) after the ground has frozen 5 cm (2 in) deep prevents frost heaving of bulbs. Plant the bulbs 5 cm (2 in) deeper than the recommended depth, this allows for the planting of annuals over top of the bulbs. Space large tulips five to six inches apart, and species tulips closer together. Dust the bulbs with a bulb dust to prevent disease and insect problems. Place the flat side of the bulb down, nose up, cover with soil and firm the soil. After planting, water the bed deeply. Bulbs left in place from year to year also need to be well watered in the fall, this allows good root establishment.

Once the plants poke through the ground in the spring remove the mulch, and check the soil moisture levels. Dry soil will cause the blossoms to blast (fail to open). Bulbs need regular watering during the growing season, right up until the foliage starts to yellow, then gradually reduce the water until the leaves die.

"After the flowers fade cut them off with a sharp knife or scissors, leaving the flower stem with the leaves," says Barkley. "Leave the foliage until it naturally dies back. Fertilize at the end of flowering with 10-30-10 or bulb fertilizer, this increases the food storage of the bulbs. Bulbs can be left in place for three to five years. Bulbs used for naturalizing will need to be lifted when their blossoms get smaller and smaller in number."

To increase the number of bulbs, rearrange the planting, or rejuvenate a crowded planting by lifting and replanting. Bulbs can be lifted anytime after the foliage dies and falls over. They can be replanted immediately, or air-dried and stored in a warm, well-ventilated room. The plants can also be dug once flowering is finished and placed in a nursery area (heeled in). The foliage is left to mature, then dug, cleaned and stored.

For avid gardeners, Alberta Agriculture published ***Alberta Yards and Gardens***, a 225-page book filled with information about flowers, vegetables, herbs, trees, shrubs and grasses that grow best in Alberta's climate. The book is available at all Alberta Agriculture district offices and through the Publications Office at 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5B6. The cost of the publication is $15 plus GST. For phone or mail orders, please add $2 plus GST for shipping and handling.

Contact: *Shelley Barkley*
(403) 362-1305

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Keeping up with farm direct customers

Fall is here! The last berry has been picked, the last vegetable washed. From now until spring, customer contact tends to slow down for farm direct marketers and fruit and vegetable growers. Traffic to your farms may disappear. Your presence at farmers' markets or in a farm store may diminish but you still want your business to remain fresh in the minds of your customers.

"Stay in contact with customers during the off season," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock. "A newsletter may be the long-term, marketing tool a business needs to keep in contact with customers. A newsletter can be a flexible and inexpensive method to communicate a business' message, educate, introduce new products/services, and create a year-round presence. However, a newsletter cannot stand alone as the only promotional strategy. To be effective it needs to be part of the overall marketing plan."

If it's going to be read, a newsletter must contain valuable information for the reader (the target market). An effective newsletter will illustrate a business' strengths and benefits with testimonials from and articles about satisfied customers. Articles need to demonstrate the reliability and consistency of the business and provide useful product information - not just sales information.

"When planning a newsletter, set objectives," adds Engel. "Determine whether it is intended to build and maintain awareness for the business, to provide expanded information about products and services, to create a relationship and maintain customer loyalty, or to obtain new business. Deciding what you want the newsletter to accomplish, before it is created, is critical."

Create a mailing list for the newsletter from your client list. Promote it in your promotional literature or on the label. For example, the label might include a call to action such as 'to receive your free newsletter phone (area code) 555-5555'. If you collect e-mail addresses, an on-line newsletter can be established. Imagine the possibilities during the busy season. Instant updates on what's available and when!

You may only wish to distribute the newsletter prior to the big summer season or only once during the quiet season, prior to the Christmas holidays. The distribution method might be handing it out at farm stores, markets or with farm gate sales. For consistent presence, the frequency of publication is three to four times a year. Remember that a shorter, more frequent newsletter gets read more often that a longer, infrequent one.

Newsletter contents depend on the target audience. What does the market want and need? Ideas include:

- Update clients on what the family is doing. One of the trends driving farm direct marketing is based on the urban consumers desire to connect with the farmer, their family and the farm. So tell them about the latest happenings on the farm with people, animals and crops, spotlight staff and inform them of factory or farm tours.
- Highlight where raw product comes from. For example, promote your province, *Alberta Saskatoons, Certified Organic* or *Locally Grown*. Explain the history and procedures associated with these labels. Let people know where a free product sampling will occur.
- You can subtly promote your products by including: recipes, menu ideas, product spotlights, ideas for creating a gift basket with your products, new merchandise updates and seasonal suggestions.
- Don't forget information on crop pickings, upcoming events, an outlet listing, any special offers like gift baskets and, of course, a map.

"Create a standard format that you can use with each issue," says Engel. "It makes it much easier to write. The format might include: farm update section, recipe section, food safety section and a staff spotlight. Work with a local writer. Many enjoy fresh produce in exchange for written copy. Three-hole punch the newsletter to encourage people to keep it. Every time someone wants to make your recipe or try out one of your gourmet cooking tips, they will see your name and be reminded about your product. The challenge is to create a newsletter people can't wait to receive. How it is seen, as with any of your promotional materials, is how your business is seen."

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

Dr. James Helm receives ASTech award

Dr. James Helm, senior research scientist at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Field Crop Development Centre in Lacombe, recently received an Alberta Science and Technology Leadership award for innovation in plant breeding.

The Alberta Science and Technology Leadership Awards Foundation is a non-profit society established to identify and celebrate outstanding achievements in science and technology.

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Dr. Helm received the Innovation in Agricultural Science prize which is presented annually to an individual, team of individuals or company that has demonstrated exceptional innovation or developed a technology of significance to Alberta's agriculture industry. In 2001, the Prize consists of $10,000 and an ASTech sculpture. This Prize is sponsored by AVAC Ltd. and is to further the recipient's research and innovation.

Helm has made significant inroads in developing new cereal varieties and innovative technologies required for plant breeding. He is a pioneer and leader in the application of Near Infrared Reflectance Spectroscopy (NIRS) technology to the agriculture industry. His interest and work in NIRS began in 1975. In a joint project with the University of Alberta and later, the Field Crop Development Centre (FCDC), Helm continued developing the technology. Today, NIRS provides rapid, non-destructive analysis of whole grain samples, using a relatively small sample size. It cost-effectively predicts feed quality and uses no chemicals, making it environmentally friendly.

Helm came to Alberta in 1973 and established the first developmental research program at Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. He manages the Alberta/Canada Barley Development Program, a research program partnering the federal and provincial governments with various industry representatives. Helm has had a major impact on agriculture research in Western Canada and around the world. In recognition of his many contributions, the J.H. Helm Cereal Research Centre was completed in 1998.

Contact: Dr. James Helm
(403) 782-4641

First GALA awards presented

The GALAS (Growing Alberta Leadership Awards) were presented to five winners representing leadership and innovation in food safety, food quality/nutrition/life sciences, the environment, economic development and distinguished service at the 2001 Harvest Gala, October 12, 2001.

The awards program, launched this fall, is designed to honour leadership and innovation and to provide examples of excellence for the industry to emulate. This year's call for nominations resulted in an impressive response signaling strong growth and diversification in Alberta's agriculture and food industry. The GALAS are sponsored by a team of industry and government leaders who have embraced the program's mandate. A panel of well-known industry leaders judged the nominations.

The 2001 GALAS winners are:

- **Alberta Quality Pork** - Food Safety category, sponsored by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Alberta Agriculture Food and Rural Development
- **Ceapro Inc.** - Food Quality/Nutrition/Life Sciences category, sponsored by Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
- **OCCI Composting Technology Centre** - Environment category, sponsored by Alberta's Credit Unions
- **Sunterra Group** - Economic Development category, sponsored by Alberta Treasury Branches
- **Eugene Dextrase** - Distinguished Service category, sponsored by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce

"These winners raise the quality bar for all of us," says Aaron Falkenberg, chair, Growing Alberta. "Each one of them represents leadership in Canada, and on a global scale. They are a huge part of the reason we can celebrate harvest this year and for years to come."

Contact: Ron Brown
Executive Director, Growing Alberta
(780) 955-3714
e-mail: <Ron.brown@growingalberta.com>

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Beef science seminar

Registration is underway for the 2001 National Beef Science Seminar November 14 to 16, 2001 at the Lethbridge Exhibition Park. Hosted by the Lethbridge Research Centre, the seminar features international speakers and a trade fair to showcase the industry. "The conference will be a barometer of the latest research and science-related issues in the beef industry," says organizer Brian Freeze, head of the Centre's livestock sciences section. Full registration is $240. Further information is available from registrar Jennifer Squires in Lethbridge at (403) 317-2296, fax (403) 382-3156. Further information is available on the Centre's web site <www.agr.gc.ca/science/lethbridge>.

An Alberta food indulgence

The ***Indulgence*** event is being held at the Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton, on November 6, 2001. The goal is to enhance the awareness of quality prairie food products and wines, further the understanding by the public of the relationship between producers, chefs and consumers and to recognize and celebrate the chefs and restauranteurs who use and support regional food products. The event will showcase Alberta-made food and beverage products by incorporating them into the evening's regional cuisine menu selections. The afternoon portion of the event is a regional food product trade fair. It will include a sampling of regional specialties and dishes made from these foods. The evening event (7:00 to 9:00 p.m.) is a food and wine showcase featuring regional products, VQA wines and restaurants specializing in regional cuisine. The chefs will invite guests to sample the various food products. Guests will be asked to pick their favourite food and wine combination for the People Choice Award. Judy Schultz, noted prairie author, will be the M.C. for the evening. Approximately 350 establishments have been invited to the trade show component and 250 consumer tickets ($40 per person) are available for the evening cuisine portion of the event. For further information, contact Janice McGregor, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development at (780) 939-4351, Morinville, or Nancy Kindler, Full Course Strategies Inc. (780) 413-9266, Edmonton. The Junior League of Edmonton, a service organization that sponsors children's programs is the charity recipient of net proceeds.

Focus on animal grazing behaviour

The Society of Range Management is holding the International Mountain Section Annual Fall Meeting and Seminar at the Black Knight Inn, Red Deer, on November 8 to 19, 2001. Animal grazing behaviour, specific to cattle, is the topic of focus at the seminar. Guest speakers scheduled for the seminar include: Fred Provenza, Utah State University; Ray Bannister, a Montana rancher; Mike Alexander, Alberta Land & Forest Service; and Barry Irving, University of Alberta. Presentations include the Science of Grazing Behavior; A Montana Rancher's Experience with Grazing Behavior; and, Integrated Aspen Control. For further information or to register, contact the Lakeland Agricultural Research Association (LARA) at (780) 826-7260, Bonnyville, or Rhonda Olsen, (780) 672-0957, Camrose.

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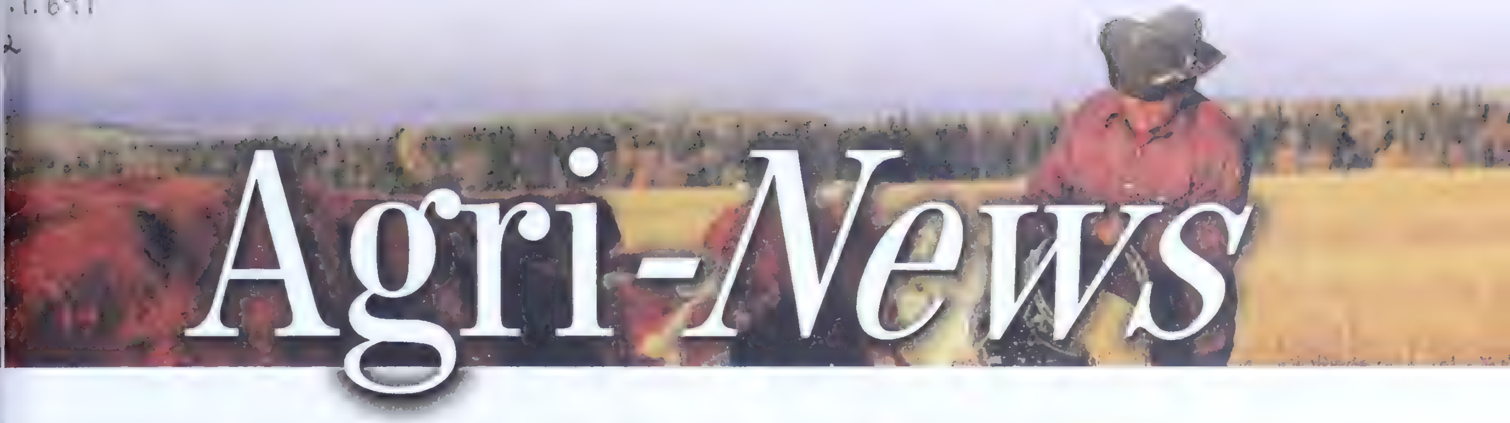

October 29, 2001

National 4-H Week - Celebrating our youth

Across Canada, young Canadians will be celebrating National 4-H Week from October 29 to November 4, 2001.

"4-H makes a difference today and tomorrow, in the lives of young people," says Betty Grudnizki, provincial 4-H media and marketing specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "4-H members have an opportunity to practice skills that lead to the protective factors researchers have identified in healthy youth and adults."

Alberta's 4-H program helps youth, under the mentorship of caring adults and a supportive community, prepare for success. 4-Her's learn about the environment, conservation, technology, entrepreneurship, life skills and agricultural production and marketing. 4-H also plays a key role in the development of community leadership skills for youth and adults. Both the individual and our communities benefit from this training. The Canadian 4-H Council's Measure of Success research indicates that participation in community affairs in later life is enhanced by 4-H membership. More than 90 percent of 4-H alumni surveyed report being a volunteer member of one or more community organization as and about 59 percent were officers or executives.

Alberta's 4-H program is a strong voice in rural Alberta. "We are first, among all the provinces, in the number of adult leaders - 2800 strong," says Grudnizki. "As well, we have the highest number of 4-H members of any province in Canada." Alberta's 4-H program is strong. There's something for everyone. To join 4-H or become a Leader call

(780) 422-4H4H or visit the 4-h web site at http://www.4h.ab.ca

Contact: *Betty Grudnizki*
(780) 422-4H4H

ABA, a new way of keeping track

The Agricultural Business Analyzer (ABA), an agricultural financial analysis computer program, has been developed by the Agricultural Business Management Branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. The 18-page spreadsheet workbook program is available to producers for free download from the Alberta Agriculture web site.

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AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"ABA will be useful to farmers, ranchers, credit industry professionals, consultants, educational industry professionals and others," says Ron Lyons, financial management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Olds. "The program can be used to financially analyze agricultural operations, or to teach financial management. Users will need to have Excel '97 or 2000 loaded onto their computers to run the ABA program."

With ABA, financial information is not entered on-line, but rather users download the ABA Excel based program from the web site and use it privately on their own home computers. Any users having problems with the program or difficulty understanding the information it provides should contact one of Alberta Agriculture's farm management specialists for help.

"The benefit to producers is vast. When they enter their financial information into the ABA program, they will get a financial analysis of their farming operation, showing them their financial strengths and weaknesses," adds Lyons. "The ABA program will do a financial business plan for the producer for the upcoming fiscal year. After the analysis is completed, the producer can print it off and use it for the annual review with their banker."

The program separates the workbook into six portions.

- The first portion gathers information about current, intermediate and long-term assets and liabilities and then creates a net worth statement for the last fiscal year. It also displays a summary of the assets, liabilities and net worth and compares them to results from the previous two years. A ratio analysis of the net worth statement information can be found at the bottom of this portion.
- The second portion of the program does a projection for the upcoming fiscal year. It includes livestock, cropping and dairy enterprise analysis and production pages. This section ends with an income, expense and debt servicing summary page.
- The third portion is a net worth summary, summarizing the changes occurring to the assets, liabilities and net worth of the business over the projected year. ABA then creates a pro-forma net worth statement.
- The fourth portion is a cash flow allocation and summary pages. Cash income, capital sale and borrowing sources of cash can be allocated to specific months, as can cash expenses, capital purchases and debt retirement uses of cash.
- The fifth portion of the program is a risk ratios and benchmarking page. This section summarizes and analyzes income, expense, asset, liability, net worth and debt servicing information in specific financial ratios.
- The sixth and final portion is a notes page to document explanations of the content of the workbook.

ABA is available for free download from Alberta Agriculture's web site at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/business/aba/aba.html>.

"Alberta Agriculture, through the Alberta Business Management Branch, is hosting ABA training programs across the province this winter," says Lyons. "The workshops are called ***Agricultural Financial Management 2002***. Instructors will go to any location that can provide eight to 12 course participants for the three-day course. The fee for the course is small, $50 per student per day, or $150 per course per student."

Courses are already planned for **Olds** - November 5 to 7, 2001, **Camrose** - January 15 to 17, 2002, **Taber** - January 28 to 30, 2002, and **Fairview** - February 12 to 14, 2002. For further information, or to register for any of the workshops, contact the Agricultural Business Management Branch at (403) 556-4240 in Olds, Gordon Williams at (403) 330-3031, Lethbridge, Dann Mattson at (403) 556-4248, Olds, or Lyons at (403) 556-4236, Olds.

Contact: *Ron Lyons*
(403) 556-4236

New video targets Jr. High students

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has a new video available to help junior high students find out about one of the most basic concepts in agricultural production.

"Agricultural production is based on a simple equation, that being that inputs or resources equals yield. As long as the two sides of the equation remain the same, there is balance," says Alberta Agriculture information officer Ken Blackley, Edmonton. "Quite simply, to increase yield, you must raise the level of one or more of the inputs. And the best choice among the inputs to increase is technology."

The 39-minute video, entitled ***It's a Matter of Balance***, features six sketches by the Multi-Youth Production group that convey this concept to students in a very entertaining way, explains Blackley. "The sketches are designed to help students become aware of the choices available to them, as well as their accountability for the ultimate decisions that are being made," he adds.

The video is available for loan from any Alberta Agriculture Regional Advisory Service district office, or from the Alberta Agriculture's central Multi-Media Library located at 7000-113th Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6.

Contact: *Ken Blackley*
(780) 422-3951

Cont'd on page 3

Growing for Tomorrow

The Alberta Horticultural Congress and Prairie West Trade Show are being held at the Mayfield Inn, Edmonton, on November 8 to 10, 2001.

"To make sure the Congress is of interest to commercial growers in Alberta, each of the organizing associations has arranged for speakers of particular interest to their members," say Shirley Alton, Congress coordinator, Edmonton. "The 2001 Congress is organized by a committee of Alberta professional horticultural grower organizations, including: Landscape Alberta Nursery Trades Association (LANTA), the Alberta Market Gardeners Association, the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association, the Fruit Growers Society of Alberta and the Flowers and Herb Producers."

LANTA is bringing in Jim Stolzenburg, Bailey Nurseries, Minnesota, to discuss *Breeding Roses*; and Paul Lemarch, JPL Consulting, Newmarket, ON, to present *Understanding the Productivity of Equipment* and *What's Your Breakeven Point Per Hour*. LANTA have also arranged to several additional speakers at the Congress.

The Alberta Greenhouse Growers, as well as having several out-of-province speakers scheduled, are pleased to have Dr. Mirza present *What to Give Good Quality Plants* and Marnie DesJardins speaking on *Mixed Hanging Baskets and Planters*.

"Some of the Alberta Market Gardeners presenters include Patty Bretin, Bretins Flower Farms presenting *Cut Flower Production* and Belinda Chobban on *Speciality Vegetables for High End Restaurants*," adds Alton.

The Fruit Growers have invited Gabe Botar to speak on *Propagation of Native Fruits with Cuttings*. Paul Hamer, Saskatoon Farm and Sandra Purdy, Prairieberries, will present grower profiles.

The Flower and Herb Producers round up the program with two of their speakers being suzanne Catty, presenting on the *Potential Therapeutic Effects of a Number of Hydrosols*, making them an emerging new value added product to the North American herbal industry, and Fran Eldridge speaking about *Culinary Herbs*.

To receive a copy of the full program with all of the 65 speakers listed, call Alton at (780) 415-2324 and leave your name and mailing address. A program and registration form will be sent to you.

Contact: *Shirley Alton*
(780) 415-2324

Fall seeding of crops

Alberta producers are turning their attention to the fall seeding of crops. Decisions on time of seeding and general crop management depend on the actual crop being grown.

The first general group is the fall cereal or winter annual crop. Normally, this means fall rye, winter wheat, or winter triticale. These plants require some growth in the fall to get established. Much of the top growth dies back over winter and the plants re-establish in the spring. They need a vernalization period before they can produce seed. In this case, you need to plant early enough for the plant to establish before winter. In central Alberta, the target seeding date is considered to be about early in September. The best date does vary a bit on individual farms.

"Earlier seeding provides more plant growth in the fall," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist, with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "That is a good thing if you want some fall grazing but it can lead to more leaf disease if too much plant material is left to overwinter. Recommended management is to direct seed into stubble, seed shallow (no more than one inch deep) and limit the amount of nitrogen (N) fertility available to plants in the fall. This can be achieved either by banding fertilizer away from the seed, or by applying extra Nitrogen fertilizer in a broadcast operation in the spring."

Fall seeding of canola and forages is altogether a different situation. Forages that are not well established before winter and any canola that is growing going into winter will die under freezing conditions. The objective here is to seed the last day before winter so that germination takes place in the spring. There will be some loss of seed over winter but under good conditions this will be minimal. There are products available to coat canola seed to prevent it from germinating in the fall. These give you about an extra two weeks protection so you do not have to predict the first day of winter so accurately.

"Small seeded crops should always be seeded shallow," adds Hockridge. "One half of an inch (1/2") deep is close to ideal. Fertilizer can be banded in the fall. A broadcast application of Nitrogen could be applied in the spring, too. It is important to apply enough phosphorous in the fall."

In recent years, there has been a lot of talk about the benefits of fall seeded crops in keeping the soil in place over winter. To get the desired effect, be sure to use the right version of fall seeding.

Contact: *Ron Hockridge*
(780) 361-1240

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Adding value to the farm

Agriculture is more than the growing or raising of food. Today's agriculture includes so much more.

"Many farms across North America are successfully bringing consumers out to their farms for a fee to savor the rural life and to experience agriculture and it's value added products," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Westlock. "Land, where the only inhabitants were fruit, vegetables or cows, is now increasing its revenue potential through direct marketing. The Farm Direct Marketing industry is growing around the world. Here in Canada, Ontario and British Columbia seem to be the most developed. There is much room for growth in Alberta."

Farm Direct Marketing includes activities such as: school tours, corporate parties, bus tours, farm store, festivals and events. The themes and variations are endless.

Before adding a new product or service to the farm there are a few things that should be thought about. The following list comes from the 2001 North American Farm Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA).

- Will your facility hold that many people?
- When are your busy times?
- Where are your customers coming from?
- What do your customers want?
- What are your customers willing to spend?
- When do people think of you?
- If you create it, can you manage it?
- Do you offer enough parking?
- Do you have ample restrooms?
- Can you afford to advertise it?
- Does it make you unique?

"Incorporating a farm direct activity involves adding a mix of activities," adds Engel. "Food is a must. Other examples include wagon rides, music, demonstrations, mazes, petting zoos, educational exhibits, fishing and kids play areas. It's the slant you put on these activities that make an operation special. The important thing is to create a unique experience for customers."

Where do you start?

- **Visit farm direct marketing operations** and check out web sites. Here are two good Canadian ones <www.cloverdaleproduce.com> and <www.puddicombefarms.com>
- **Join an organization** - phone your Agriculture Department for information on provincial ones and check out the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association at1-888-884-9270 or <www.nafdma.com>
- **Attend conferences** - local ones are taking place across the country and NAFDMA will be hosting Progress North 2002 in Toronto in January 2002 with the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association
- **Check out government web sites** - Alberta's is www.agric.gov.ag.ca. Arizona State has a great manual on it's web site at <www.ag.arizona.edu/AREC/pubs/dmkt/dmkt.html>

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

Agri-News Briefs

FIDP - notification for the 2001 claim year

Currently family labour is excluded for Farm Income Disaster Program (FIDP) purposes. In the FIDP Guide for the 2000 claim year, it was reported that commencing from the 2001 claim year, family labour would be allowed as an eligible expense under FIDP to the extent they are fair, consistent and verifiable. After further review, it was decided to continue to treat family labour as an excluded expense for FIDP purposes for the 2001 claim year. Hence, there will be no change to the current rule of excluding family labour for FIDP purposes. For more information on FIDP, call 1-800-851-5070, or visit the web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/afsc>.

CFI releases annual fertilizer sales stats for 2001

For Alberta, the per cent change between 2000 and 2001, they report a 12.9 per cent decrease for **nitrogen**, 12.3 per cent decrease for **phosphate**, 0.3 per cent decrease for **potash**, and 5.9 per cent decrease for **sulfur**. With the drought of 2001, the poor soil moisture conditions in southern Alberta, higher than normal soil nutrient level carry-over in southern Alberta, it is understandable why there is very little fall fertilizer activity. The report is available at the CFI web site < http://www.cfi.ca/ >. For further information, contact Ross McKenzie, research scientist soil fertility/crop nutrition, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge (403) 381-5842.

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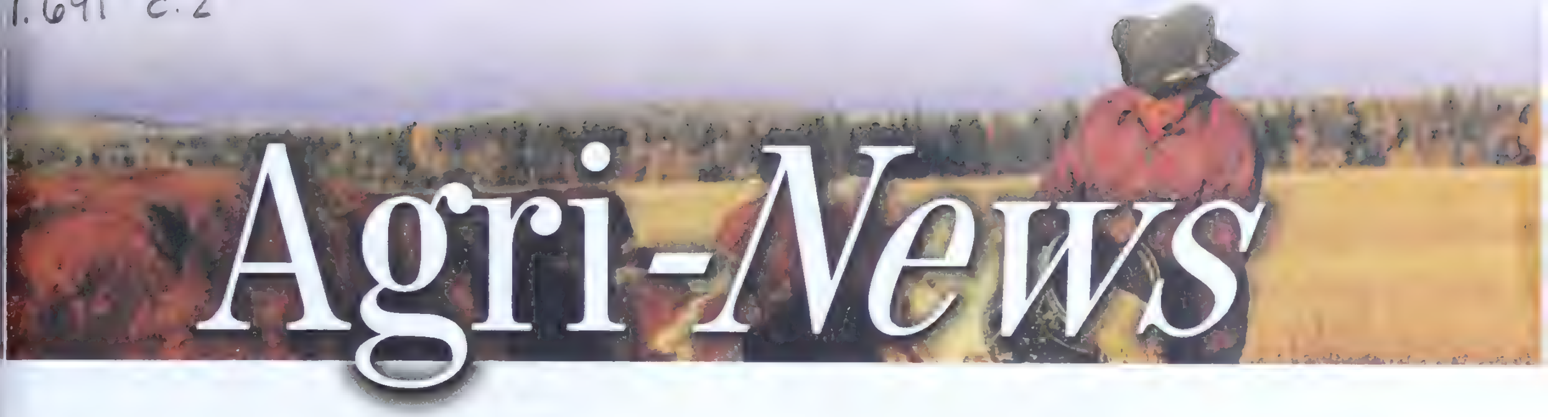

Agri-News

November 5, 2001

AgTech Centre delivers seven-point checklist for selecting bale processors

Bale processors offer key benefits for cattle feeding, but the variety of models on the market can make it difficult for producers to make the best choice for their operation. The AgTech Centre in Lethbridge has developed a seven-point checklist and a series of fact sheets to help make this decision easier.

"As the feeding and cattle industry in general has grown, interest in bale processors has, too," says Blaine Metzger, project technologist at the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development AgTech Centre in Lethbridge. "Choosing the right model is not easy. While most processors are designed to operate under a variety of conditions, each has unique advantages and features."

The AgTech Centre's seven-point checklist is based on extensive testing of seven leading processor models. Key points to consider are: processing functions, power supply requirements and operating horsepower, types of material handled, ease of operation, speed of processing, cost and durability.

Processing functions vary greatly among bale processors, meaning producers should carefully consider the type of functions they need. "For example, some processors cannot spread heavy layers of bedding or are limited in the spreading distance, while other models spread material over greater distances to cover hilltops for erosion control, sugar beet piles to increase storage time or manure lagoons for odour control," says Metzger. "Some processors spread an even layer of bedding across the entire distance, whereas others do not."

Feedbunk height is also another consideration. Some processors can reach high feedbunks and evenly distribute material over a fence to a feedbunk on the other side, whereas others can't.

"Regardless of size, all producers may want to consider a processor with the ability to add supplemental feed or nutrients to the processing material," adds Metzger. "In Southern Alberta this year, many pastures produced very little or nothing, so processors that could accommodate mixing in feed ingredients were in high demand."

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Most bale processors are PTO driven and the horsepower requirements can range from 60 hp to 150 hp. Many small operations have limited power to operate the machines, but manufacturers have developed a range of models to accommodate almost any size tractor.

"A substantial majority of processors also require one to three hydraulic remote hook-ups to operate mechanisms such as self-loading forks, rotating material chambers or for material feeding rotors," Metzger says. "Some of the more basic models require another tractor to load the processor, but most are self-loading, so that is something else to consider.

"Determining the type of material the processor will handle on an operation is a big factor in deciding which model to choose. Some can handle only round bales, or only square bales, while others can handle round bales, large square bales, small square bales and even small loose materials such as wood chips."

As well, some processors can handle only dry material, yet others can efficiently process wet material. In the evaluations, the processors with large, open material chambers and rotors, as well as large distribution chambers, were able to process all materials, though some were more efficient than others.

Large, open material chambers, distribution chambers and rotors also play a part in the operating ease of a processor. As well, machines that allow numerous adjustments for processing mechanisms offer the most trouble-free processing. Adjustments for material feeding, processing speed and aggressiveness, length of cut, material distribution and other parts of the processing sequence are the best for controlling the final product.

"Speed is another factor to consider, but isn't as critical for the smaller operations as for large feedlots," explains Metzger. "An adjustable, aggressive processing mechanism and material feeder system with a large processing chamber ensures the quickest processing of all materials. A large open distribution chamber also helps because it provides the least material flow resistance."

Price and durability are significant factors as well. The cost of a bale processor will vary depending on the adjustment capabilities, processing capabilities, materials handled, self-loading ability and extra options. A general rule in assessing durability is the fewer moving parts the better.

"Ultimately, farmers will have to decide what is right for their specific operations. Choosing a bale processor is a compromise between features, capabilities and cost," says Metzger.

For more information on bale processor selection, including bale processor buying guides and Evaluation Report 747, Bale Processors, contact the AgTech Centre at, 3000 College Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, T1K 1L6, phone (403) 329-1212, fax: (403) 328-5562.

The recently renamed AgTech Centre is part of the Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Agricultural Engineering Branch. The AgTech Centre has expanded its mandate to include all aspects of agricultural sustainability.

Contact: *Blaine Metzger*
(403) 329-1212

Rick Atkins
Manager, AgTech Centre
Alberta Agriculture
(403) 329-1212

2001 Alberta Sheep Symposium

The eighth semi-annual Alberta Sheep Symposium is being held at the Red Deer Lodge on November 17 to 18, 2001. The symposium is jointly sponsored by the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission, the Alberta Sheep Breeders Association (ASBA) and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

"The organizing partners have attempted to bring in a variety of speakers that should appeal to symposium attendees," says Wray Whitmore, sheep specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton. "This will be a chance for sheep producers to hear presentations on timely topics that have an affect on their industry and can affect their operations and the direction their operations are going in."

Topics being addressed include management issues, farm diversification, intensive versus extensive sheep production, milk production, mastitis, and emerging animal health issues such as scrapie and foot and mouth disease.

Speakers include: Yves Berger, Spooner Agricultural Research Station, Wisconsin; Dr. Paula Menzies, Associate Professor at the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC); Dr. Penny Greenwood, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA); Dr. Ann Clark, Ontario Agriculture College (OAC); and, Lance Brown, British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Food (BCMAF).

"The topics and speakers should prove to be very interesting for Alberta producers," adds Whitmore. "It is hoped that all producers who attend will leave with some information that will help in their sheep operations."

For further information or to register, contact Amy Jackson, ASBA, at (403) 335-4348, Didsbury.

Contact: *Wray Whitmore*
(780) 422-0575

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Building an agri-tourism industry in Alberta

Tourism is the world's fastest growing industry. One sector of that industry that has seen significant growth in recent years is agri-tourism. There is a growing market of consumers that are intrigued by the mystique of their rural heritage and want to share in the harvest of food and fun down on the farm. This emerging industry, however, faces many challenges. How is marketing an agriculture product different from marketing a tourism experience? What does the tourism customer need and want from their agri-tourism experience? What about issues of accessibility, distance, having enough to offer, and working with other industry partners?

"Industry and government working together can face these challenges," says Sharon Stollery, rural development specialist - business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Stony Plain. "Alberta Agriculture would like to invite you to share your input into a provincial strategy to grow agri-tourism in Alberta. What do you see that needs to be done? Who should be responsible? What are the priorities?"

Don't miss the chance to have your views heard! Attend one of these five locations:

Red Deer	November 14	Black Knight Inn
Airdrie	November 20	Best Western Inn
Grande Prairie	November 22	Grande Prairie Inn
Lethbridge	November 27	Ramada Hotel & Suites
Nisku	November 29	Days Inn (Formerly Nisku Inn)

All meetings are from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM and include lunch.

"Although registration is free, we need to know how many will be there for lunch, so registration is a must," adds Stollery.

To register or for more information contact: Amber Kluthe, 780-963-6101 (toll free in Alberta by dialing 310-0000), or e-mail <amber.kluthe@gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: *Sharon Stollery*
(780) 963-6101

Municipal applications for GIS and GPS

Recently, many municipalities have added the technologies of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to their management abilities and tools. These technologies make it easier to computerize and track the reams of spatial data that are required to run municipalities efficiently.

Municipalities require information about properties, roads, maintenance activities and many other spatial entities, on a daily basis. In the past, much of this information was collected and stored on paper maps or in files. This was cumbersome and made the information difficult to store and retrieve. The introduction of computers in municipal offices has provided the ability to store and retrieve files with greater speed and efficiency.

"The development of GIS technology allows for the storage, retrieval and analysis of spatial records on a level that is now available to the average municipal office," says Keith Boras, manager of Agriculture Services, Lacombe County. "Developments in GPS have also made it a usable tool for municipalities."

Many municipalities have adapted GPS receivers to maintain equipment (graders, mowers and snowplow trucks) to track their operations and collect more accurate information about costs and efficiencies. GPS units are being used to collect inventory information about signs, culverts, and bridges. This technology has been incorporated into some Roadside Spray Programs to collect information about chemical application and weather conditions during these operations. This type of data is important in making better management decisions and is also useful in protecting the municipality from liability.

By incorporating data into a GIS, the municipality has the ability to view and analyze information. Many municipalities have this information available at the Council table so that Councils have access to the latest and best information during the decision making process.

"The ability to maintain spatial data has allowed many municipalities to now produce their own updated ownership maps," says Carrie Selin, provincial program specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's resource management and irrigation division. "Previously maps were often outdated because the county could only afford to update the maps every three to four years."

The upcoming Site Specific Management (SSM) Conference and Tradeshow will showcase some of these applications and allow potential users to become acquainted with this technology. The conference is being held at the Mayfield Inn in Edmonton on December 10th and 11th, 2001. Registration forms are available at all Alberta Agriculture offices, at most Agricultural Service Board offices, or they can be printed directly from the Alberta Agriculture web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/conference/ssm/> and then faxed or mailed in. For further information, contact Carrie Selin at (780) 427-3587 or Sheilah Nolan at (780) 427-3719.

Contact: *Keith Boras*
(403)782-6601

Carrie Selin
(780) 427-3587

Sheilah Nolan
(780) 427-3719

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Club Works - how to jumpstart an Ag marketing or production club

Marketing and production clubs have been part of the agricultural landscape in Alberta for a long time. Common interests, including a desire for economic growth, have resulted in producers banding together.

"A new resource package, ***Club Works*** builds on the finding of a research project done by the University of Alberta and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and funded by the Farm Business Management Program," says Kathleen Ozmun, rural development specialist-organizations with Alberta Agriculture, Smoky Lake. "Clubs across Alberta were surveyed to determine how they establish, operate and maintain successful organizations. The results show why agricultural marketing and production clubs can be an excellent way to increase skills in marketing and production, build networks, and ultimately contribute to the success of a farm business."

The ***Club Works*** package contains a resource listing for marketing and production clubs, the Executive Summary of the research project and a series of six factsheets:

- Benefits of Belonging to a Marketing or Production Club
- Structure in a Marketing or Production Club - Establishing the Framework for Success
- Lead On! Effective Leaders in a Marketing or Production Club
- GOALS - For Marketing and Production Club Success, Get it in Writing
- Get Connected - The Value of Building Networks for a Marketing or Production Club
- Hang in There - Building Commitment in Your Marketing or Production Club

"Existing clubs will benefit from information on how to keep their clubs vibrant," adds Dean Dyck, farm management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Red Deer. "Producers who are thinking about forming a club will find useful strategies for starting and maintaining an organization. Any grassroots organization in rural Alberta can gain insight into what makes a successful organization and adapt strategies for strengthening their own group."

For more information or to get a copy of this resource package, contact Ozmun at (780) 656-3613 or Dyck at (403) 340-7007.

Contact:	*Kathleen Ozmun* *(780) 656-3613*	*Dean Dyck* *(403) 340-7007*

Calgary and Lacombe volunteer leaders named to 4-H Hall of Fame

Darrel Neal of Lacombe and Jerry Hall of Calgary were named as the 2001 inductees to the Alberta 4-H Hall of Fame. The announcement was made by Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development as part of the preparations leading up to National 4-H Week, October 29 to November 4, 2001.

"Both inductees represent the quality and diversity of 4-H volunteers in this province," says McClellan. "They are program volunteers who at various times could be found in the boardroom, at the committee table or beside a 4-H member, sleeves rolled up and getting down to work."

Neal, who died in January 2001, was given posthumous recognition. Mahlon Weir, head of the 4-H Branch of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, believes that Alberta 4-H experienced a great loss with Neal's passing. "Neal was a long-time 4-H leader whose energy and enthusiasm for 4-H inspired him to become involved from the club to the national level. His gentle demeanor, patience and hard work made him an ideal mentor for 4-H members."

Jerry Hall is also a long-time supporter, advocate and promoter of the Alberta 4-H program. "Jerry's leadership skills and knowledge of business and human resources have been important assets to the 4-H Foundation," says Weir. "His warmth, positive attitude and willingness to get the job done and get it done right, inspire everyone he meets."

Since 1971, the 4-H Hall of Fame has honoured Alberta volunteers who have made outstanding contributions to the 4-H program. Each inductee has demonstrated strong leadership skills and has had a positive impact on the 4-H program and its members.

"Alberta's 4-H programs offer tremendous opportunities for young people to develop important leadership and communications skills," adds McClellan. "The volunteer leaders who dedicate their time to mentoring these young people deserve to be recognized. We are proud to honour two such outstanding leaders this year."

Neal and Hall will be officially inducted into the Alberta 4-H Hall of Fame at the Alberta 4-H Leaders' Conference Banquet in Red Deer on January 12, 2002.

Contact: *Penny Wilkes*
Provincial 4-H Leadership Development Specialist
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 427-4514

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000

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Agri-News Briefs

Excellence in agri-business

AVAC Ltd. has made a call for nominations for the 2002 Agrivalue New Venture Award of Distinction. The award will be presented to an Alberta business that has achieved commercial success in adding value in the agricultural sector. The Agrivalue New Venture Award of Distinction is sponsored by AVAC Ltd. in partnership with the Alberta Chamber of Commerce as part of the Alberta Business Awards of Distinction. AVAC Ltd. invites all Albertans to celebrate the success of agrivalue entrepreneurs by nominating them on-line by visiting <www.avacltd.com> and clicking the Agrivalue Call for Nominations under the What's New heading. Nominations for this award close on **November 19, 2001**. The award will be presented at the Gala Banquet on February 28, 2002. For further information, contact Mike Leslie or Kim McLelland at (403) 274-2774.

Farmland values

Farm Credit Canada (FCC) has released the ***Farmland Values*** for the six-month period of January 1 to July 1, 2001. With the exception of Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, farmland values remained stable or experienced some growth in all Canadian provinces. Land values across Canada increased by 0.6 per cent during this reporting period. In Alberta, land prices continued to climb. Land values in the province rose 2.6 per cent during the current reporting period, moderately higher than the 1.5 per cent increase during the previous period (July 1, 2000 to January 1, 2001). Drought conditions in parts of central and southern Alberta resulted in a demand for forage and pasture land. Increased value was reported for irrigated land suitable for feed production and special crops, also. Prices for land in grain producing areas remained stable, chiefly due to low grain prices and greater input costs. In northern Alberta, land values, for land suited to beef operations, were slightly higher than seen during the last half of 2000. FCC produces ***Farmland Values*** twice each year. For further information, contact Roy Hjelte (306) 780-7997, or visit the FCC web site at <www.fcc-sca.ca>.

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Agri-News

November 12, 2001

2002 Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference

Each year in Alberta, the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development organizes the ***Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference***. The 2002 conference is being held on January 11, 12 and 13, 2002 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer.

"The Horse Breeders and Owners Conference is a premier horse conference," says Les Burwash, manager of equine programs with Alberta Agriculture. "This is the only conference of its kind in Canada. The 2002 conference features 15 internationally recognized speakers making presentations on topics ranging from industry concerns and stable management to feeding and horse health."

Conference speakers include: Dr. Deb Bennett; Dr. Donna Chaw; Bill Collins; Dr. Steve Duran; Kimball Lewis; Dr. Karyn Malinowski; Dr. Richard Miller; Greg Gartner, David Switzer; Dr. David Wilson; and, Dr. Lori Warren, provincial horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton.

Topics included in the agenda are:

- Handling Horses Safely
- Using Learning Styles to Teach More Effective Riding Lessons
- Evaluating Conformation for Athletic Ability
- Managing Angular Limb Deformities
- The Process of Aging
- Managing the Geriatric Horse
- Feeding & Managing the Geriatric Horse
- Feeding Myths and Misconceptions
- Effectiveness of Oral Joint Supplements
- Establishing and Maintaining Good Client Relationships
- The Horse Industry and Revenue Canada
- Working Together to Build and Promote the Horse Industry

The conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests in the audience. While many attendees chose to follow a particular program, conference participants can attend any of the sessions, and will receive the printed materials from all sessions.

The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 11 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

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Through sponsor contributions, the cost of registration is kept to a minimum. The 2002 Conference, conducted by the Alberta Agriculture, the Alberta Quarter Horse Breeders Group and the Canadian Thoroughbred Horse Society - Alberta Division, with major sponsorship from the Alberta Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, is also supported and sponsored by: Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture; Alberta Equestrian Federation; Alberta Equine On-Line; Alberta Veterinary Medical Association; Appaloosa Horse Club of Canada; Ayerst Veterinary Laboratories; Cargill Animal Nutrition; Champion Feed Services Ltd.; Equi-Master Inc.; Feedrite; Horse Publications Group; Horse Sense Herbs Ltd.; Horses All; Intervet Canada Ltd.; Jones Boys Saddlery & Western Wear; Light Force Canada; Masterfeeds; Merial Canada; Minitube Canada; Northern Horse Review; Olds College; Overseas Horse Transport; Pacific/Prairie Horse; Sciencepure Nutraceuticals; Trail Riding Alberta Conference; United Farmers of Alberta (UFA); Vetoquinol N.A. Inc.; Western Canada Heritage Centre; Wild Rose Equine Ranching Association; and the Alberta S.P.C.A. This sponsorship is sincerely appreciated.

Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2002 conference, contact the Horse Industry Branch in Airdrie at (403) 948-8538 or in Edmonton at (780) 415-6107. Government numbers are toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first.

Contact:	*Les Burwash* *(403) 948-8538*	*Lori Warren* *(780) 415-6107*

Barley workshop that keeps on giving

Attending a workshop usually provides attendees with information, hands-on experience and a chance to discuss and network with other producers who face the same challenges, concerns and issues. Once the workshop is over, while you still have the information and notes, the opportunity for discussion and debate are over, too. Not so with the ***Managing for Profit During the Next Millennium Producers Workshops*** being presented by the Western Barley Growers Association (WBGA).

"After last year's WBGA workshop, the organizing committee instituted a monthly conference call where all attendees were welcome to join the forum," says Graham Gilchrist, farm management specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vegreville. "The opportunity for on-going discussion and debate on topical issues is a real plus for producers who attend the workshop."

In 2001 and 2002, WBGA is offering the following workshops:

- **November 27 to 28, 2001** - Lethbridge College and **December 11 to 12, 2001** - Airdrie Agricultural Centre Being held in two locations, this **Producer Workshop #1** is introductory, and feature topics such as: Agriculture in Transition; Financial Statement Preparation; Choking on Success; Nine Signals of Financial Success; Business Turn-Arounds; Winning with Lenders; Developing Investor Capital; and, Managing Your Plan.
- **January 15 to 16, 2002** - Airdrie Agricultural Centre - **Producer Workshop #2** takes agricultural management one step further. Presentation topics include: Financial Overview of Canada/US Agriculture; Profile of Troubled Commercial Agriculture; Documentation for Financial Management; Advanced Financial Analysis; Overview of Budget Forecasting/Control; Budget Documentation; and Implementation.
- **February 12 to 13, 2002** - Airdrie Agricultural Centre - **Producer Workshop #3** features Advanced Financial Management and Calculating the Agricultural Value of Farm/Ranch Land. Topics include: Agriculture in Transition; Financial Documentation; Financial Calculation Procedures; Advanced Case Analysis; External Factors Affecting Land Values; and, Land Calculations Procedures.

The workshops feature speaker Roy C. Ferguson II, CMC/CAC and president of Ferguson Group (Tulsa) Ltd. Ferguson specializes in business turn-arounds and strategic planning for expansion. He is a former member of a special advisory committee to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, is a certified management consultant and a certified agriculture consultant. Cofounder of the Ferguson Agri-Management Institute at the University of Tulsa, Ferguson is also author of the book *Managing for Profit in Commercial Agriculture*.

"These workshops will give producers the financial understanding they need to develop plans for achieving maximum success in today's agricultural industries," says Gilchrist. "The workshops are recommended for anyone in full-time commercial farming, or Albertans in related fields of agribusiness and education who wish to gain a better understanding of business financial management. We have a registrant coming all the way from Illinois because Alberta is the only location where Roy Ferguson is conducting these workshops. They are a great opportunity for Alberta producers."

Seating is limited to 70 participants at each workshop, so early registration is advised. Registration must be received two weeks prior to each seminar. Registration fee is $150 (plus GST) for the first person and $80 (plus GST) for each additional person from the same farm unit. Registration fee covers all course materials, workbooks, handouts, refreshments at breaks and noon meals. Each participant should bring a calculator for working problems.

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For further information, contact Ed Armstrong with WBGA at (780) 954-3769 or Bradley Smith with Alberta Agriculture at (403) 223-7907.

"We look forward to these workshops and the discussions that always ensue," adds Gilchrist. "Additional members for the bimonthly conference calls is also keenly anticipated."

Contact: *Graham Gilchrist*
(780) 632-5400

Red clover pasture potential

Productive pastureland is a prime consideration for Alberta's livestock industries. Trials on various legumes and grasses give producers much needed information when planning pasture seeding and improvement.

Red clover, a short-lived perennial legume with good quality and productivity, is adapted to grey-wooded and black soil areas and is fairly acid tolerant. It develops a deep tap root, similar to alfalfa. It is more tolerant to water logged soil than alfalfa is, but less so than birdsfoot trefoil or alsike clover. This shade tolerant legume makes it possible to establish growth under some cover and seedlings are more aggressive than most other legumes.

"Red clover is a good pasture legume," says Myron Bjorge, forage crops supervisor with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lacombe. "It is palatable with very good nutrient quality and high animal intake. Red clover isn't considered to be as grazing tolerant as some legumes. Grazing too closely or too frequently decreases its longevity. Rotational grazing with long rest periods is the best management practice for red clover. Letting the plants regrow to the bud stage or more enables them to replace food stored in the roots."

Close or frequent grazing of red clover in late summer and fall is especially detrimental. To keep red clover competitive in a mixture with grasses, the addition of soil nutrients is needed. As with other legumes, inoculation with nitrogen fixing bacteria is beneficial.

"Red clover does have disadvantages, too," adds Bjorge. "It is bloat causing. It is subject to winter kill from root food depletion in the fall. Being short-lived is red clover's most limiting factor for its use as a pasture crop. Single cut types are longer lived than double cut types. Altaswede is the most common single cut type grown in Alberta."

On machine clipped trials at Lacombe and Bentley, Alberta, red clover yielded surprisingly well. On these trials, four or five cuttings were made per season to simulate grazing. Over the first two harvest years of these trials, red clover yielded just over 7000 pounds per acre at both sites, putting it second in yield over-all at Lacombe and highest in yield at the Bentley site. Altaswede was the highest yielding at Bentley, and a European variety was best at Lacombe. By year three of these trials, however, red clover had diminished in the stand to the point where yield was low.

"The red clover trials noted here showed it to be very productive over two harvest years but then, as often occurs, the crop started dying out. However, if stands could be maintained, it has the potential to be a very productive pasture forage," says Bjorge. "Red clover depends mainly on the persistence of originally established plants for its perennial habit. It doesn't naturally re-seed to a great degree and has no vegetative means to spread. There have been interesting results with rejuvenating stands by various means. To make red clover a more useful pasture legume, these rejuvenating practices need to be considered."

Several years ago, a Grey Wooded Forage Association trial on red clover showed positive results of over-seeding red clover onto a hay/silage field containing a small portion of red clover and high grass component. In that trial, red clover was broadcast with a cyclone seeder followed by chain harrowing to achieve some seed to soil contact. Seeding was repeated on the same land in the spring of 1989 and October 1989 and 1990, at 7.0 to 8.5 pound per acre each time. The grey wooded soil was fertilized with 25 N, 25 P, 20 K and 20 S. The result was that the percentage of cover of red clover increased from one per cent in June 1989 to 22 per cent in June 1991 in the seeded plots.

"With proper management practices, it should be possible to improve the longevity and productivity of red clover for pasture," says Bjorge. "These practices include appropriate grazing and fertility management, combined with a means to re-establish red clover into existing stands. The crop's productivity makes it a legume worth considering in pasture forage plans."

Contact: *Myron Bjorge*
(403) 782-8026

Promoting agri-business with permission marketing

It's not always easy to decide how to promote a business. Deciding whether to use newspaper, radio or word-of-mouth, really depends on the business and the audience.

John Stanley of John Stanley Associates, Australia, made a presentation on promoting agri-businesses in January of this year at the North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association (NAFDMA) conference about ***Promoting Your Business and Increasing Your Sales***. Stanley classifies promotional strategies into two categories: interruption marketing and permission marketing. To develop a well-rounded promotional plan, it's important to get the right mix of both strategies.

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"Interruption marketing includes marketing methods that interrupt the buyer's life, using devices such as newspapers, radio announcements and flyers," says Kerry Engel, rural development specialist-business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Westlock.

Permission marketing is where Stanley feels businesses will see growth and opportunities. With this method, the buyer gives businesses permission to sell to them. This is sometimes referred to as relationship marketing. There are four basic guidelines to remember in developing effective, permission marketing:

- Create a learning relationship with the customer.
- Develop a database to track people.
- Have something to say! Tell a story.
- Always work to develop the relationships with the customers.

Stanley suggests that 60 per cent of a marketing strategy should be composed of permission marketing, 30 per cent interruption, and the remaining 10 per cent should be reserved for unknown opportunities that may arise, such as tradeshows for example.

Permission marketing ideas:

- **Start at home** - don't let advertisements create a disappointment for customers once they get to a business. Take ideas (differentiating position) back to your team, the people who work directly with your customers. The culture in a business needs to be congruent with the marketing messages being sent out. For example, if you promote friendly, knowledgeable staff, that is exactly what must be provided.
- **Create a database** - get the names, addresses, phone numbers, even e-mail addresses of customers. Use this database to develop a relationship with them. Let them know of special events, deals or programs.
- **Network with other business** - find out where else your customers go, and cross-promote. Offer coupons to clients for using the other business and vice-versa.
- **Develop a newsletter** - structured in the right way, newsletters can be a very useful marketing tool. If it's longer than a seven-minute read, there is a risk of it being trashed. Be sure to make the newsletter short and sweet. Start with an exciting lead story and build stories around a product or service. The second page might contain two stories that are relative to the customer base. Page three is a good page to profile one of the staff members, a customer, a product, or provide recipes and other fun ideas related to the products and services the business sells. A map and business information is best situated on the back page.
- **Incorporate fun** - customers like to see you having fun. There are a number of ways to show this entertaining side of a business. Kids can enter your business through a special entry designed just for tots, such as a big sign shaped like a teddy-bear. Staff can dress-up for Halloween. Instead of using negative signs everywhere, such as *Don't touch this* and *Don't enter here*, use humor, for example, "Customers will be propagated, pruned and potted if they ...."

It's all about building a '**Customers for Life**' philosophy. When you consider the value of a customer over their lifetime - the dollars spent per visit, times the number of visits, times 10 years - it shows just what the lifetime value of a customer is. Businesses need to ask themselves what they are doing to build lifetime customers, and then take steps to enhance these efforts.

The next NAFDMA conference is in Toronto in January 2002. Check out their web site for more information <www.nafdma.com>.

Contact: *Kerry Engel*
(780) 349-4465

4-H'ers Take the LEAP!

In October 2001, 35 senior 4-H members from across Alberta took part in the first ***Take the LEAP!*** (Learn, Educate and Present) program. The program, held at the Alberta 4-H Centre at Battle Lake, helped prepare the 16 to 20 year old delegates to give presentations to 4-H members.

During the program, delegates discussed topics such as preparing using audio-visuals, setting up a room and presentation styles. They also had the opportunity to focus on one of three topic areas - meeting management, public speaking and yearly diaries.

Delegates are looking forward to giving presentations. Eiry Spence, a delegate at the program, says, "*Take the LEAP!* is a super program focused on leadership in senior members. I now feel fully prepared and excited to share the knowledge obtained with other 4-H'ers and leaders." Kelsey Hamer, program delegate, adds, "4-H allowed me to *Take the LEAP!* in to my future, and the future of 4-H members around me."

The program will be an annual event, thanks to the support of program sponsors Agrium Youth Leadership Initiative, Olds College, UFA (United Farmers of Alberta) and the Alberta 4-H Program Trust.

If you are interested in having one of the delegates at Take the LEAP! give a presentation to your group, contact the 4-H office in your area.

Contact:	*Stacy Murray* *(780)835-2241*	*Jocelyn McKinnon* *(780)674-8250*
	Janet Kerr *(403)742-7547*	*Milo Barfuss* *(403) 381-5815*

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Agri-News Briefs

Beef science seminar

The 2001 National Beef Science Seminar is being held at the Lethbridge Exhibition Park on November 14 to 16, 2001. An international group of speakers will address industry-shaping research, environmental challenges, genetics, disease control and option for boosting meat quality. The seminar, hosted by the Lethbridge Research Centre (LRC), will create a forum where the best beef research from across Canada and around the world will be discussed. The three-day event features eight core sessions on the latest research. Participants will have opportunities to question speakers at each session. Seminar registration is $240 and includes attendance at all sessions, a copy of the seminar proceedings, meals and the banquet. Single day registrations for either Wednesday or Thursday are $120 and include session attendance, seminar proceedings and meals for the day. For further information, contact Jennifer Squires, seminar registrar at the LRC, (403) 317-2297, fax (403) 382-3156, or e-mail <NBSS@em.agr.ca>. Details of the seminar are also available on the LRC web site at <www.agr.gc.ca/science/lethbridge>.

Egg consumption in Alberta

Research company, AC Nielsen recent tracked egg sales in grocery stores in Canada. They found that shell eggs are still the most common form consumers buy. Consumers are buying more eggs, with sales of shell eggs in Canadian retail stores increasing two per cent in a 12-month period ending April 21, 2001. Alberta consumers are buying more specialty eggs (omega-3, organic, etc.) than ever before. Although Alberta's specialty egg market is small, it is the second fastest growing of any province in the country (growing 66 per cent in the same 12-month period). Only B.C. had a higher growth rate for specialty eggs. Alberta consumers are also buying more liquid eggs. This market, too is small, but a rapidly growing one, increasing 83 per cent in the one-year period. While these specialty markets represent relatively small volume, the percentage changes are significant. For further information, contact the Alberta Egg Producers Board (AEPB), (403) 250-1197, Calgary, e-mail <altaegg@telusplanet.net> or visit the AEPB web site at <www.eggs.ab.ca>.

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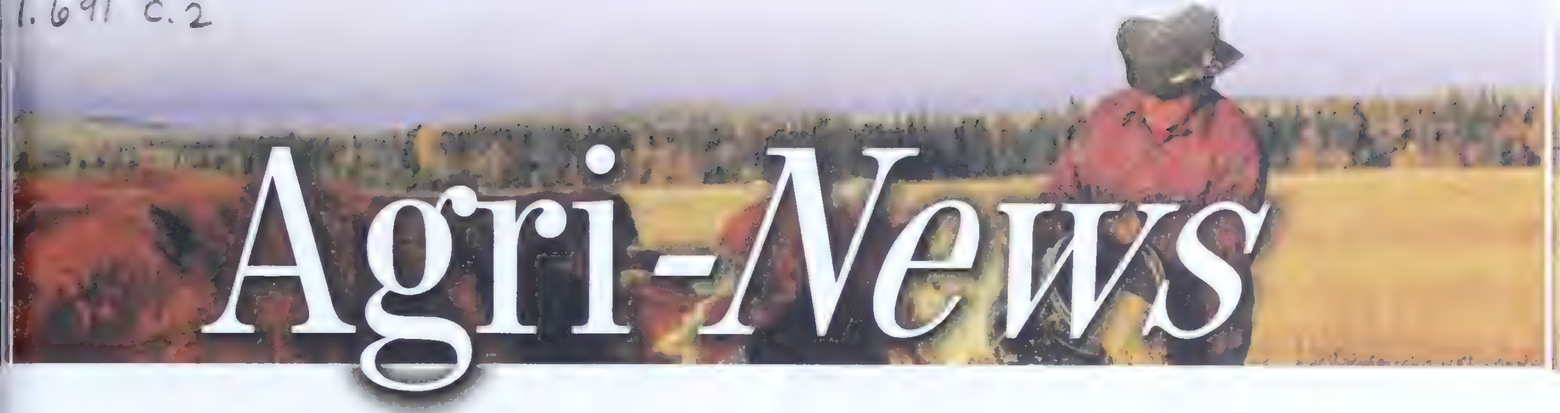

Agri-News

November 19, 2001

Production of small potatoes

The popularity of small, gourmet, fresh market potatoes has increased in recent years. Production of small potatoes can be managed to a large extent, although it's not entirely controllable.

"Producers wishing to grow for this specialty market can follow a production plan to produce small potatoes, or they can remove small tubers from a mixed lot," says Clive Schaupmeyer, potato specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Taber. "There are several factors that contribute to small tuber size. Knowing these factors helps producers work with them to produce this specialty crop."

Harvested tubers may be small if:

- the crop declines early because of under fertilization or low soil moisture
- the crop is harvested about 70 to 90 days after planting, or conversely
- planting is delayed until approximately 70 to 90 days prior to the target harvest date
- tuber numbers (under individual plants) are high, resulting in increased competition, and
- plant populations (within the row) are high, resulting in increased competition.

The first three practices result in reduced yields. Immature tubers that are harvested early, or those harvested later (but just 70 to 90 days after late planting), might not store well.

Growers could find that it makes more sense to control size by increasing tuber populations by increasing tuber set per plant and increasing plant population. Growers wishing to supply small tubers over an extended period can choose two or more techniques to produce small tubers.

Some varieties tend to produce higher tuber numbers than others. Cal Red sets heavy and could be suitable for gourmet tuber production. Bintje tends to set over an extended period and tuber sizes can be kept relatively small. Early varieties, such as Norland, develop to a marketable size just 70 or 80 days after planting and definitely have a role in a gourmet potato operation.

Several controllable inputs will increase tuber numbers under individual plants or within a given length of row.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"Large, whole seed pieces produce more stems per plant than smaller seed or cut seed," says Schaupmeyer. "Tuber set (number) is directly related to stem number, therefore, the higher the stem count per plant, the higher the tuber set. For irrigated baby potatoes that will be harvested for storage, producers will want at least four or five stems per linear foot of row."

Seed that is warmed or aged prior to planting will produce higher tuber sets than cold or young seed. Warming seed at 10 or 12°C (or more) for two weeks (or more) prior to planting is mandatory. Seed can also be aged by maintaining storage temperatures slightly higher than normal (5°C instead of 3°C) for two to four months during the storage period, however, this may result in sprout growth prior to planting time. The warmth and length of the growing season the year before also affect seed age. For this reason, it is difficult to establish the exact tuber setting potential of potato seed tubers.

"High moisture when plants are between 15 and 30 cm high is critical to high tuber set," adds Schaupmeyer. "Studies have shown that moderate dryness during tuber set (tuberization) results in significantly lower tuber numbers. Contrary to popular belief, tubers start forming when potato plants are about 15 to 20 cm high. Soil moisture at or above 75 per cent of available capacity, when the plants are between 15 cm high and blooming, results in high tuber set. By the time potatoes have bloomed, tuber numbers have been established by stem numbers and soil moisture."

Increasing the in-row population results in more stems (and tubers) in the row and therefore competition for nutrients, moisture and sunlight is increased and this reduces the size potential of each tuber. Growers who strive for high yields of small tubers should plant potatoes at 15 cm in the rows. Yields of most varieties increase as in-row populations increase. Seed requirements are high at these high populations. Increased populations may require increased fertilization and water.

Contact: Clive Schaupmeyer
(403) 223-7903

Alberta bans use of dogs for recreational coyote hunting

In response to public concerns, the Alberta government has taken action that strictly limits the practice of using dogs to kill coyotes

"Many Alberta residents let the government know they were concerned that people were using dogs to kill coyotes as a form of recreation," says Mike Cardinal, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. "My department advocates on behalf of wildlife in Alberta and it is important that we reflect the values of Albertans in this area."

It is now illegal for anyone to hunt coyotes with dogs in Alberta, unless they have obtained a temporary permit to do so. Livestock producers can be granted a temporary permit only when they have proven coyotes are responsible for the death or injury of livestock they own, and only as a last resort - following other coyote control measures.

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development share the responsibility for dealing with livestock losses caused by predators. The regulations have been changed and greatly restrict the practice of using dogs to kill coyotes.

The changes to the regulations included Shirley McClellan, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, amending the regulation under the *Agricultural Pests Act* to create the permit system, and Mike Cardinal, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, amending the wildlife regulation under the *Wildlife Act*.

McClellan encourages producers to talk with their local agricultural fieldmen about ways of preventing coyotes from killing livestock.

"Coyotes are an important and valuable wildlife species," says McClellan. "Unfortunately, they can also prey on livestock and cause extensive losses for producers."

It is a violation under the *Wildlife Act and Regulations* for people to hunt coyotes using dogs without having first obtained a temporary permit to do so. Violators can be fined up to $2,000, serve up to one month in jail, or be given a combination of both penalties.

Alberta livestock producers are encouraged to speak with their local agricultural fieldman if they are having coyote predation problems. Livestock producers will still be able to use dogs to destroy coyotes as a last resort, but only after proving that coyotes are responsible for livestock injury or death.

Coyotes do eat harmful rodents, insects and carrion and are considered an important wildlife species in Alberta. However, coyotes also cause over 75 per cent of the predation losses of livestock in the province, causing considerable losses for producers. Producers should be diligent in taking preventative measures, including: removing and properly disposing of dead livestock, increased supervision during calving or lambing, exclusion fences for predators and using guard animals such as dogs or donkeys.

Coyote Predation of Livestock is a book published by Alberta Agriculture that can help livestock producers prevent or reduce losses from coyotes and other predators. The book shows how to determine the cause of death and how to interpret the signs at the scene of the attack so that the predator species can be identified. The 31-page book is available at all Alberta Agriculture district offices and from the Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6, or phone 427-0391 in the Edmonton area or toll free in

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Alberta 1-800-292-5697. Cost of this publication is $8 plus GST. Please add $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling of mail orders.

Contact: John Girvan
Manager, Inspection Services
Animal Industry Division
Alberta Agriculture
(780) 427-4567

Richard Lyons
Enforcement - Field Services
Fish and Wildlife Division
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development
(780) 422-1370

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free connection

Changes to the Alberta Grain Commission

Over the last few months, some changes have been made to the structure and membership of the Alberta Grain Commission (AGC). The AGC is an appointed group mandated to review issues relating to the grain and oilseed sectors, maintain liaison with industry groups inside and outside Alberta, make recommendations to the Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and promote the ongoing growth and development of the grains industry in Alberta.

These changes to the AGC include a new chairman, Eugene Dextrase, a farmer from High Level replaces Ken Moholitny (now Assistant Deputy Minister of Planning and Competitiveness with Alberta Agriculture). Dextrase has been a member of the AGC for seven years and has served on numerous other associations, including the Canadian Canola Growers Association and the Northern Alberta Development Council.

Also, Doug Horner, MLA for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert, will now serve as vice-chairman, enhancing the link between industry and government.

Lou Normand, director of the Processing Industry Division for Alberta Agriculture, is the new department representative. He is one of two department representatives on the Commission. He will bring the perspective of the grain processing industry to the table.

Jim Ness, a farmer from New Brigden, is the new farmer member.

Dextrase, Horner, Normand and Ness form the Commission, along with farmers Lloyd Annable of Carmangay, Ken Motiuk of Mundare, Pat Durnin of Kathyrn, Terry Niemela of Eckville, Harry Schudlo of Sexsmith, and a second department representative, Murray McLelland from Lacombe.

Brenda Brindle is the new AGC general manager.

For further information regarding the Commission, contact Brindle at (780) 427-3077.

Contact: Brenda Brindle
(780) 427-3077

GPS - a key to the future

New developments in Global Positioning Systems (GPS) mean that even the least expensive GPS units can provide locations that are accurate to within 15 meters. This gives GPS tremendous potential for increasing the economic efficiency and environmental friendliness of agricultural management practices. This tool offers critical information needed to apply inputs specifically as needed instead of the uniform, overlapping rates that have been traditionally applied. This is important because the economic and environmental costs of misapplying inputs can no longer be afforded.

GPS provides spatial reference for information about different site conditions. However, its usefulness multiplies when coupled with a Geographic Information System (GIS) to provide spatial context or *connect the dots* between pieces of information. "Using GPS to measure field perimeters and then calculate input amounts, or to reduce overlap between spraying passes is becoming common," says Sheilah Nolan, research agrologist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Coupling GPS locations with GIS adds an important spatial dimension to fine-tune management. A good example is putting yield monitor measurements in the context of a yield map. This lets the producer know exactly where and over what area that management attention should be focused. Bringing in other soil or economic information makes the map even more useful. Adding economic information, a yield map can be converted into a profit-loss or Money Map. The information may show that some acres aren't covering the direct cost of inputs, or aren't even covering fixed expenses. The farmer would then know exactly which part of his field did not generate any profit and could then assess the feasibility of continuing to apply that level of input. The potential for GPS and GIS to improve management is huge."

GPS and GIS are being featured at the ***Site Specific Management - Keys to the Future Conference and Tradeshow***, December 11 to 12, 2001 at the Mayfield Inn, Edmonton. "The conference is not just about precision farming," says Nolan. "There are many other GPS and GIS applications that can improve management in the municipal, health and environmental fields. Low cost, low tech GPS applications will also be featured. Demonstrating some of the possible uses of GPS, will get people thinking about other uses for GPS.

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"There are 43 excellent speakers lined up for the conference, farmers, agronomists and researchers from Alberta, Montana, Saskatchewan, Minnesota and Ontario. The conference has three concurrent break out concurrent sessions directed to producer, industry and municipal audiences, but participants are welcome to jump between sessions. Some of the themes that will be addressed include: Environmental Issues and Variable Rates, Making SSM Profitable, and Practical Uses of the Technology."

There will also be a Poster Session on SSM research updates at the conference. Researchers from across Western Canada will highlight their results on a wide range of SSM related topics. Twenty posters will feature the results of SSM research in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. There will be at least two opportunities for conference participants to discuss these results first-hand with the researchers.

The conference includes a tradeshow for participants to learn directly about new developments in such products as GPS units and grain protein monitors. There'll be demonstrations of automated guidance systems, a GPS equipped roadside sprayer, and GIS software. A template to convert yield maps to Money Maps will be available free of charge at the tradeshow. A limited number of booths are still available. Anyone interested in securing a booth space should contact Carrie Selin (780) 427-3587, email <Carrie.Selin@gov.ab.ca>.

The ***Site Specific Management*** conference is sponsored by the Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture program. More details about the conference can be found at: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/conference/ssm/>. Registration forms can be printed directly from the web site and mailed or faxed according to the information listed on the form. Certified Crop Advisor credits are available. Inquire about a group rate for producers only. Registration deadline is December 1, 2001.

For more information, contact Nolan at (780) 427-3719 or email: <Sheilah.Nolan@gov.ab.ca>.

Contact: Sheilah Nolan
(780) 427-3719

Market based farming

We have heard a lot about market based farming in recent years. Many farmers consider their production to be market based because they alter their acres according to current markets. They use the marketing tools such as futures marketing, forward contracting, options and basis contracts to get the best price for their product too. So what can be more market based than that?

"The basic premise of market based production is to find out what the world wants to buy and then produce it," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "This is in contrast to producing a product and then going out to find someone who will buy it. You can usually still use the marketing tools to stabilize commodity prices to some extent, but you are in a better bargaining position to get a decent price from the market if you have what the market wants."

Finding what the world wants requires more effort than just selling into traditional markets. It often means finding a niche market and that involves gathering more information. It also means checking details to ensure your side of any business deal is protected. Some people are able to get the information they need from the news, subscribing to newsletters and personal contacts. Others find it easier to set up a network of people to share the research work.

Marketing clubs have had varying degrees of success. A few elements contribute to their longevity. First, they have to be initiated by the people who will benefit from them. Efforts by extension staff to get a marketing club going have only been successful for a short time unless someone from the group decided to take it over. Second, the group has to decide to meet on a regular basis. After all, marketing is all about timing. The research has to be done to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. Third, there has to be some structure and accountability. One objective of a marketing club is to spread the work around and communicate findings back to the group. There is a synergistic effect when people pool their information. New ideas build on each other when everybody contributes.

Most marketing clubs spend some of their time educating their members. They take advantage of resources in both government and industry to make sure their members have the tools and the information to make the best decisions on marketing and what to grow.

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

Protein essential in winter forage diets

With hay being in short supply this year and all forages selling for record prices, this may be the winter to include more straw in the diets of beef cows.

"Straws are quite variable in feed quality but usually do not contain the proper balance of protein and energy to meet the needs of a non-lactating cow during cold winter weather," says Lorne Erickson, forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Rimbey. "The amount and type of protein offered can have a large effect on cow performance."

Energy is often identified as the most critical nutrient in maintaining a cow on a cold winter day, but the cow's ability to access that energy, especially from high-fibre feeds such as straw can be limited by lack of protein.

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"There are three energy sources available to cows: body fat; the non-structural carbohydrate and digestible fibre portions of forage; or concentrated sources such as grain," adds Erickson. "Body fat reserves are the cheapest energy source, but taking off too much could become expensive in terms of productivity. By design, the cow's rumen is best suited to process forages into protein and energy."

Digestible protein can be divided into two portions: degradable intake protein (DIP) that is readily available to the microbial population in the rumen and; un-degradable intake protein (UIP), sometimes called bypass protein that passes through the rumen and is absorbed at the small intestine. For the rumen to use high fibre feeds efficiently, enough DIP must be provided to the microbes so that they can extract the available energy. Supplementing with adequate DIP will increase consumption of low quality forages and increase animal performance. Not all protein supplements are equal in their ability to supply DIP.

"Good quality alfalfa hay is higher in DIP than grains," says Erickson. "When feeding a straw/grain diet, a few pounds of second cut alfalfa can improve the cows' use of the straw. Canola meal, legume seed screenings or molasses-based supplements are also effective. However, be cautious that all animals are getting adequate amounts. When small quantities are fed daily, dominant cows could be taking more than they need. Feeding a protein supplement as little as once or twice per week can improve on use of low quality forage."

Producers should remember that drastic changes in management can contain surprises, so plan carefully and make use of feed nutritionists and veterinarians and watch the herd closely for animals that are not performing well.

Contact: Lorne Erickson
(403) 843-2204

Cash awards for 4-H scholars

Alberta 4-H members received scholarships equaling over $70,000 this fall. Numerous corporate and private sponsors contributed to the 2001 Alberta Provincial 4-H Scholarship Program. More than 100 Alberta 4-H'ers were awarded scholarships to help them achieve their academic goals and personal career dreams.

Karen Stewart, 4-H scholarship coordinator at the Alberta 4-H Foundation explains, "Over 200 applications were submitted. The applicants, from all across Alberta, represent a wide variety of choices for educational study, from Agriculture degrees to environmental studies."

Scholarship applicants submit an application form in May, highlighting their achievements in 4-H, school and their communities. As well, they complete a written interview and provide three references. Some scholarships require an additional assignment on a specific topic. Each applicant is scored based on this information and selection is based on criteria set by the scholarship sponsor. A committee representing sponsors, the 4-H Foundation of Alberta, Alberta 4-H Councils, the University of Alberta, and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development select the scholarship recipients.

Betty Grudnizki, provincial 4-H media and marketing specialist comments, "The quality of the applicants this year was outstanding. I am in awe of the 4-H diary points earned, academic achievement, and community involvement of these members. Every applicant would have been considered a worthy recipient, so selection was difficult. Congratulations to all of the 2001 Alberta 4-H Scholarship recipients."

Members who wish to apply for the 2002 scholarships should note that there is a change in deadlines. Applications must be received by May 15, 2002 not postmarked May 15, 2002. The application form will be available on-line in January at <http://www.4h.ab.ca>.

Contact: Betty Grudnizki
(780) 427-4499

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Pork seminar

Value Chain - Business Relationships, is the theme for three seminars being held in Lethbridge on December 3, 2001; Red Deer on December 4, 2001; and, Westlock on December 5, 2001. The program, which is the same at all three locations, will present an introduction to value chains and other collaborative business concepts. Presentations include examples of value chains and other business relationships in action. Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development pork specialists Art Lange, Bert Dening and Marvin Salomons, along with value chain specialists Margurite Thiessen and Laura Lee Billings will work with small groups of producers and industry people who have an interest in starting a value chain or another collaborative business relationship. The cost for the one-day seminar is $25 per person at the door, or $20 per person if pre-registered by November 23, 2001. For further information, contact Lange (780) 632-5423, Vegreville; Dening (780) 674-8247, Barrhead; Salomons (403) 340-5336, Red Deer; or Darryl Ulledal (403) 253-9056, Red Deer.

ABC 10th annual meeting

The Alberta Barley Commission (ABC) is holding their 10th annual meeting at the Banff Park Lodge on December 6 and 7, 2001. The meeting, ***The Next Decade: Value-Added as the Way of the Future***, will provide a glimpse of the future in agriculture. Speakers at the meeting include Dr. Nancy Ames, research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's cereal research centre, and Armand Lavoie, vice president for western Canada of Foragen Technologies Management Inc. Topics under discussion include value added opportunities, barley tortilla research, the role of venture capital in the development of a value added agriculture industry. John Amatt, the principal organizer and a leader of Canada's first successful expedition to reach the top of Mount Everest, is also scheduled to speak to participants about his experiences and pushing beyond self-imposed limitations. For further information, contact the Alberta Barley Commission office at 1-800-265-9111, ext. 24.

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Agri-News

November 26, 2001

New $2.2 million in research grants available for industry and academia

The Alberta Ingenuity Fund has a new grant program for Alberta companies that rely on science or engineering research for a competitive edge.

Grants for Ingenuity Associates help industry researchers acquire new research expertise. These grants support researchers with a recent Ph.D. while they gain advanced research experience in a university, college, technical institute, not-for-profit research centre or private company. Any of these organizations can sponsor a research associate and apply to the Alberta Ingenuity Fund for support, or they can host a research associate from another organization by providing a mentor and a lab where the research will take place.

This means a private company might apply on behalf of an employee or a researcher being recruited to the company for an associateship grant. The associate could receive his advanced research mentoring in the company lab or at a university, technical institute or other eligible research centre. Some of the research may be conducted in an approved setting outside of Alberta or Canada.

"Our goal is to increase Alberta's base of excellent researchers by giving people with recent Ph.D.s the opportunity to gain advanced research experience with experts," says Dr. Bill Bridger, president of the Alberta Ingenuity Fund. "We have intentionally structured the grants to assist some Alberta companies generating science and engineering-based innovations. We also anticipate that these associates will facilitate increased collaboration between academia and private industry."

In the post-secondary educational setting, an Ingenuity Associate Membership will most commonly support a recently-graduated Ph.D. undertaking post-doctoral studies.

An Ingenuity Associateship Grant consists of a $40,000 annual stipend for two years, and an annual research allowance of up to $15,000. They will be awarded through a reviewed competition, using reviewers with expertise in relevant areas of research.

Twenty associateship grants will be funded in 2002, and 20 each year thereafter, so there will always be 40 associates in place. This is a commitment of $2.2 million every two years.

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The deadline for the first competition is February 15, 2002, and companies must meet eligibility requirements before applying.

The Alberta Ingenuity Fund is the trade name of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Science and Engineering Research, established by the Government of Alberta in 2000, with an endowment of $500 million.

For details see the Alberta Ingenuity Fund web site <www.albertaingenuity.ca>.

Contact: *Anne Thomas*
(780) 423-5735

E-mail: anne.thomas@a-ingenuity.ca

A new comprehensive book on western grasses

A new book, the first volume in a three-volume series, ***Common Plants of the Western Rangelands*** is now available. The book, a collaborative effort between Olds College, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and author Kathy Tannas, concentrates on grasses and grass-like species that occupy the western rangeland.

The 335-page book includes information on 106 grasses and grass-like species. It features hundreds of black and white illustrations. The drawings show the whole plant, roots, seed heads, close ups of identifying features such as ligules and auricles. The book also includes detailed written descriptions of growth habits, blades, sheaths, habitat and distribution, forage value and grazing response, as well as taxonomic keys to help identify any grass, sedge or rush that grows on western rangelands.

This book is a must for anyone who wants to be able to identify grass species found in Alberta's rangelands. Students, agronomists, ecologists, naturalists, ranchers, farmers and amateur botanists will find the book a very helpful identification tool.

Common Plants of the Western Rangelands is a handy coil-bound, field-use sized (6" x 9") book. Cost of the publication is $25 plus GST. It is available from the Publications Office, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6 or by calling (780) 427-0391 in the Edmonton area or toll free in Canada at 1-800-292-5697. Please add $2 (plus GST) for shipping and handling of mail orders.

Two more volumes are planned for this series, one dealing with forbes and one with trees and shrubs of the western rangelands.

Contact: *Scott Reid*
(708) 422-5154

Good production isn't the only answer

Farmers and cattlemen need to be skilled marketers. There's a good chance that unless marketing is one of the skills they have at hand, they could find themselves out of the marketplace in the future.

"Managing farms and ranches has changed a lot in the last 15 years or so," says Lee Melvill, P.Ag., market specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Brooks. "In the past, just doing a good job of producing meant success. Now doing a good job of producing isn't the ticket to a profitable operation. Many times it is found that the owners of the most successful operations in a community have better marketing skills than the rest of the community."

The first thing a farm or ranch manager needs to do to become a skilled marketer is remember that skilled marketers aren't born - they are made. One of the best ways to make a skilled marketer is to join a local marketing club.

"To me, a marketing club is like an old-time barn raising," adds Melvill. "At a barn raising, a group of people with a lot of different carpentry skills got together to build a barn. They shared their knowledge and experience to build a building that one or two of them alone couldn't possibly build. In the process, everyone learned how to be a better carpenter and they had a chance to visit with their neighbors, too."

A marketing club functions like that. It is a group of people with a lot of different marketing skills, from beginners to skilled marketers, getting together to share their knowledge and experience. In the process every club member learns how to be a more skilled marketer. And, club meetings are social occasions, too.

Farmers and cattlemen that are members of marketing clubs say they have noticed an increase in gross income and a reduction in expenses because of skills and knowledge gained from the club. That in itself is a clear benefit of learning how to be a better marketer.

Producers interested in joining a marketing club should see if there is one in their area. There are at least seven clubs operating in southern Alberta and many others throughout the province. If there isn't a club in your area, talk to your neighbors about forming one. And, don't forget to call your Alberta Agriculture district office for help with forming the club.

Give it some thought. Joining or helping organize a marketing club could definitely be worth your while.

Contact: *Lee Melvill*
(403) 362-1212

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New legislation governing new and expanding confined feeding operations

Legislation that will help ensure the sustainability of Alberta's livestock industry while protecting the health of Albertans and the province's environment was introduced in the Alberta Legislature on November 13, 2001.

Leduc MLA Albert Klapstein introduced amendments to the Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA) that will give the province responsibility for siting, monitoring and enforcing new and expanding Confined Feeding Operations (CFOs), previously referred to as Intensive Livestock Operations.

"Through three years of extensive consultation, we heard strong support for a consistent, transparent, science-based decision-making process," says Klapstein, chair of the committee that authored the ***Sustainable Management of the Livestock Industry in Alberta*** report in April 2001.

Under the legislation, the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) will broaden its mandate to provide a one-window approach for new and expanding CFOs effective January 1, 2002.

"Municipalities will still play a key role in the process," says Klapstein. "They will be encouraged to develop agricultural land-use plans and identify areas where CFO development would not be compatible with current or future land uses. As well, municipal recommendations will be an important component in NRCB decisions."

Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, adds that the livestock industry is one of Alberta's primary economic drivers. "Last year, our livestock industry contributed $4.4 billion to the provincial economy. We are projecting a record $5 billion in livestock receipts this year," says McClellan.

Alberta Agriculture led development of the legislation in consultation with the NRCB, Alberta Environment, Alberta Municipal Affairs and Alberta Health and Wellness.

Contact: *Albert Klapstein*
MLA - Leduc
(780) 415-0989

Louise Starling
(403) 340-5306

Terry Willock
(780) 422-7683

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton.

Alberta 4-H Leaders receive national recognition

Twice in November, Alberta 4-H leaders were recognized for their outstanding volunteer contributions. "It is a tribute to the dedication of the adult 4-H volunteers that we would receive this recognition," said Mahlon Weir, Head, 4-H Branch. "These are the people that make 4-H a quality program for Alberta youth."

On November 3, 2001, Marie Logan of Lomond was the Alberta winner of the Cooperators/4-H National Volunteer Leader of the Year Award. Logan is a long time leader of the Lomond 4-H Multi club and a key leader for the Vulcan district. She has served as a volunteer member of district and regional councils, the Alberta 4-H Council, and is currently the chairperson for the 4-H Foundation of Alberta. The award celebrates the International Year of Volunteers. Ten provincial winners were selected. Logan accepted her award at the Friends of 4-H Banquet in Toronto at the Royal Winter Fair.

Then, on November 5, 2001, at the first-ever Canadian Agri-Food Awards of Excellence, Alberta 4-H Adult Volunteer Leaders received the Canadian Agri-Food Award of Excellence for Voluntarism. The work of 2800 Alberta 4-H Adult Volunteer Leaders translates into about $5 million worth of volunteer time per year. They are committed to helping rural youth by providing skill development, mentoring, communication training and friendship.

The awards recognize outstanding achievements in five areas key to the success and growth of the agriculture sector: environmental stewardship, innovation, export performance, agricultural awareness and education, and voluntarism. Lyle Vanclief, Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and Don Rickard, president of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, awards sponsors, presented the awards. Accepting on behalf of the Alberta Leaders was Greg Hawkwood, president of the Alberta 4-H Council and Janice Hawkwood, leader of the Jumping Pound 4-H Beef Club.

"Canada has a reputation as a producer of safe, innovative and high-quality agri-food products, and the efforts of people like those we are honoring will ensure we enjoy that reputation in the future," said Mr. Vanclief. "The winners have all shown vision, creativity, perseverance and leadership, and have made tangible contributions to the growth of the sector and the economic and environmental sustainability of rural Canada."

Contact: *Betty Grudnizki*
(780) 427-4499

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Alberta 4-H member among six Canadian students recognized

Kathleen Leitch, member of the Humble Ace of Clubs 4-H and the Northern Lights 4-H Judging Club, was one of the Alberta delegates who attended the National 4-H Conference. The award trip provided greater rewards by the final day.

On November 3, 2001, the Canadian 4-H Council announced the names of six rural Canadian students who received a Toronto Dominion 4-H Scholarship. This national agricultural scholarship program is valued at approximately $10,000, and recognizes selected students for their academic achievements and their desire to pursue further studies in an agriculture-related discipline.

At the closing banquet for the 2001 National 4-H Conference in Toronto, the Canadian 4-H Council presented scholarship certificates to six winners, including Kathleen Leitch. Each student will also receive a cheque for $1,650.

"The Canadian 4-H Council is proud to be associated with TD Bank Financial Group in this exciting initiative, which encourages the academic development of rural Canadian youth, and educates the next generation of agricultural industry leaders," says Gary Skogberg, president of the Canadian 4-H Council.

"At TD, we are committed to encouraging education and leadership skills among children and youth," adds Dave Marr, national manager, Agriculture Services, TD Canada Trust, and a former 4-H member. "We are delighted to support an organization that so closely represents our own mandate to invest in the future of our communities."

A generous supporter of the Canadian 4-H Council since 1955, TD Bank Financial Group is committed to helping students pursue their academic goals. The TD 4-H Scholarship is a most appreciated example of that support.

Contact: *Betty Grudnizki*
(780) 427-4499

Mike Nowasad
(613) 234-4448, Ext. 22

Dave Marr
(416) 308-6369

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Family labour and FIDP claims

Although it was thought that family labour would be allowed as an eligible expense under the Farm Income Disaster Program (FIDP) for the 2001 claim year, this decision has been reversed. Family labour was never allowed as an expense under FIDP, but it was reported in the FIDP Guide for the 2000 Claim Year that the family labour rule would be changed for 2001. After further review, it's been decided to leave the current rule, which excludes family labour, as it stands. For more information on FIDP, call 1-800-851-5070, or visit the website at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/afsc>.

New chairman for AVAC Ltd.

Aaron Falkenberg, Sherwood Park, was elected chairman of AVAC Ltd. on November 9, 2001. Falkenberg has been a Board Director since the company's inception in 1997. He is chair for Growing Alberta, and a Board Member of Agriculture and Food Council (AFC), Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC), and Northlands. Also, Bernie Kotelko, Vegreville, joins AVAC Board of Directors as a new director. AVAC Board of Directors include: Aaron Falkenberg, Patrick Durnin, Bob Church, Ed Knash, Alanna Koch, Shelley Bradshaw, Tom Poole and Tom Droog. AVAC invests in innovative ideas that add value to agricultural commodities. For further information, contact Keith Jones, president and CEO for AVAC Ltd. at (403) 274-2774.

SACA conference

The Southern Alberta Conservation Association's (SACA) Dryland & Irrigation Reduced Tillage Conference 2001 is being held December 4 and 5, 2001 at the Lethbridge Lodge. The two-day conference, organized under the direction of farmers from southern Alberta, will address topics such as crop rotations, economics, farm management, chickpea production, field scouting, marketing, and pesticide free production. Advance registration fees are $60 for a two-day pass or $40 for a one-day pass. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. and the official program starts at 9:00 a.m. For further information, contact Alberta Agriculture at (403) 381-5237.

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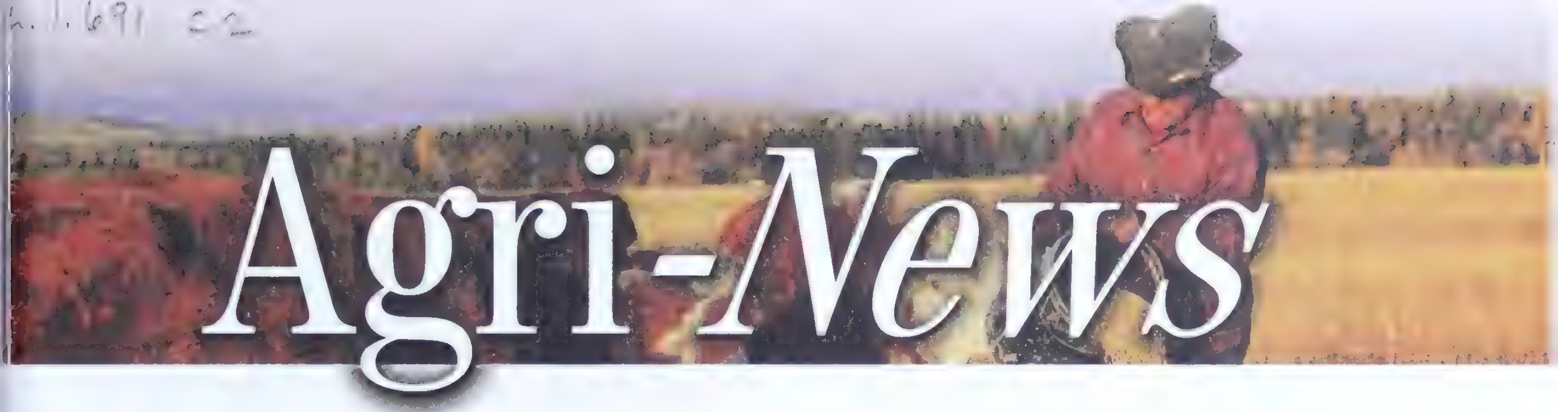

Agri-News

December 3, 2001

Agricultural water users respond to registration program in record numbers

The deadline for traditional agriculture water users to register their use with Alberta Environment is fast approaching. The program is designed to protect traditional agriculture users' rights to water by assigning the registration a priority number 'grandfathered' back to the date when the water was first put to use. The deadline to register is December 31, 2001.

"Alberta Environment launched the registration program on January 1, 1999 as a part of the new *Water Act* that came into force the same day," says Ernie Hui, Regulatory Assurance Division, Alberta Environment, Edmonton. "The department has received more than 5,700 applications to date, and is anticipating a minimum of 1,000 to 2,000 additional applications before the registration program's deadline of December 31, 2001."

Under Alberta Environment's program, a traditional agricultural user is defined as those using up to 6,250 cubic metres of water per year to raise animals or apply pesticides to crops. Users must have been using water for either of these purposes on or before January 1, 1999 in order to be eligible.

Environment Minister Lorne Taylor is pleased with the response thus far but encourages even more users to register their use before December's deadline. He adds, "If water users opt not to register they are still free to continue using water, but their use is not protected. Registration programs like this one ensure that in times of shortage, registered users are entitled to their annual water allocation before non-registered users."

To be considered for registration, an application must be completed and filed with Alberta Environment no later than December 31, 2001. For more information about this program, please call Ernie Hui at (780) 427-9496 (dial 310-0000 for a toll-free connection), or visit Alberta Environment's website at <www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/legislation/index.html>.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Facts about Water Registration

- This water registration program is designed to protect traditional agriculture users' rights to water.
- A traditional agricultural user is defined as those using up to 6,250 cubic metres of water per year to raise animals or apply pesticides to crops.
- Users must have been using water for either of these purposes on or before January 1, 1999 in order to be eligible
- To be considered a registered user, an application must be completed and filed with Alberta Environment no later than December 31, 2001.
- Users who opt not to register are not protected and may, in times of shortage, lose access to their annual water allocation.
- Information required for the application includes the date the water source was first used for raising animals or applying pesticides to crops and the volume of water being used for these purposes between January 1, 1996 and December 31, 1998.
- Under the registration program's priority system, applications are 'grandfathered' back to the date when the water was first put to use. This date cannot be earlier than July 1, 1894.
- If a user began using water after the Act came into force (January 1, 1999), he or she is required to obtain a licence unless the use is otherwise exempted under the Act.

Contact Alberta Environment for more information about this program and others like it. Call Ernie Hui at (780) 427-9496 (dial 310-0000 for a toll-free connection) or visit the website at <www3.gov.ab.ca/env/water/legislation/index.html>.

Contact:	*Ernie Hui*	*John Knapp*
	(780) 427-9496	*(780) 415-9755*

Fusarium testing program continues

Fusarium head blight (FHB) is knocking at Alberta's door. The disease, that has had devastating effects in Manitoba, southeastern Saskatchewan and the midwest US, has been moving westward. The detection frequency of Fusarium *graminearum*, a causal agent leading to FHB, has been increasing in Alberta.

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development is encouraging farmers and livestock feeders to take action now against the threat of FHB. One-kilogram samples of cereal grains can be submitted to approved labs for F. *graminearum* testing and Alberta Agriculture will pick up part of the cost.

"Alberta Agriculture has committed $60,000 to continue the program that began in March," says Trevor Schoff, cereal and oilseed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Camrose. "Four labs are participating in the program and will test samples for the presence of F. *graminearum*. The testing program will run until funds are used up or until June 30, 2002. The lab test cost is $45, of that $20 is paid by the farmer and $25 is paid by Alberta Agriculture."

"Any Alberta producer who is bringing seed or grain into the province should get a sample tested," says Bill Witbeck, provincial seed specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Lacombe. "The labs will be testing for the presence or absence of F. *graminearum*. Producers whose grain has been identified as infected will receive notice directly from the lab as well as an information package on how to handle the remainder of the infected grain. Producers can be assured that individual results of each test will remain confidential."

Livestock feeders are encouraged to send in samples of their feed grain, especially if they have imported feed from areas with high FHB infection rates. The transportation of infected feed from outside the province may be one contributing factor to the introduction and further spread of F. *graminearum* in Alberta.

Contact local Agriculture Service Boards or contact Alberta Agriculture for more information. Information can also be found on the Alberta Agriculture web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca> and the Canadian Grain Commission website at <www.cgc.ca>.

Laboratories participating in the Fusarium graminearum testing program

Agricore
4722 - 39 Street
Camrose, Alberta T4V 0Z5
Phone: (780) 672-5571/
1-800-463-2045

BioVision Seed Research Ltd
9954 - 67 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T6E 0P5
Phone: (780) 436-3822/
1-800-952-5407

20/20 Seed Labs Ltd.
Suite 201, 509 - 11 Avenue
Nisku, Alberta T9E 7N5
Phone: (780) 955-3435/
1-877-420-2099

Parkland Laboratories
5410 Gaetz Avenue
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 4B7
Phone: (403) 342-0404

Contact:	*Bill Witbeck*	*Trevor Schoff*
	(403) 782-4641	*(780) 679-1210*

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World-wide benefits for Alberta in new trade negotiations

Alberta welcomed the launch of a new round of trade negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and looks forward to additional benefits for Albertans. The broad-based negotiations were officially launched on November 14, 2001, with the release of a Ministerial Declaration at the conclusion of the 4th WTO Ministerial Conference held from November 9 to 14 in Doha, Qatar.

The Declaration reaffirmed the objective of 'substantial progress' in each of three main areas of reform in agriculture: export competition, market access and domestic support. In addition to agriculture, the new round of negotiations will also cover non-agricultural products, services, and disciplines on trade remedy laws and improvements to WTO dispute resolution mechanisms. It is hoped the talks on trade remedy laws will also lead to clearer and stronger rules governing countervail and antidumping actions, including those used by the U.S to target Alberta's cattle and softwood lumber exports.

"Agriculture trade reform under the WTO has been going on for over six years now, yet there are still more than 1,300 tariff rate quotas in existence, and overall support levels in the developed nations are the same as 15 years ago," says Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "We look forward to substantial reductions in barriers to market access, as well as meaningful reform and reduction of support of all kinds so Alberta's producers can compete on a level playing field."

The latest agriculture trade statistics show that Alberta's agri-food exports (food, beverages, feed and inedible crude animal and plant products,) increased 19 per cent in the first half of 2001 reaching $2.9 billion. Exports of primary commodities (animals and crops) were also up 14 per cent while exports of value added products grew by 24 per cent. Value added exports ($1.5 billion) have remained strong and represent more than half of Alberta's total agri-food exports in 2001. Beef continues to be the major value added product, moving up 25 per cent ($836 million) over the same period in 2000. The United States is Alberta's largest export market, accounting for 55 per cent of Alberta's total agri-food exports, worth $1.6 billion.

Halvar Jonson, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations adds, "The province was an active member of the official Canadian delegation at the Ministerial Conference and we are pleased with its outcome. Although the federal government leads the Canadian position at these negotiations, we participate fully with the federal government to ensure that Alberta's priorities and interests are clearly understood and represented by federal negotiators. The challenge for industry and governments from this point forward will be to continue working together to ensure that the momentum toward trade liberalization is maintained."

A deadline of January 1, 2005, has been set for the completion of this round of negotiations.

The negotiations have been coined the ***Doha Development Agenda*** reflecting the strong development focus of the negotiations. Detailed information on the WTO and the Doha Ministerial Conference is available on the Internet at: <http://www.wto.org>.

Contact: *Darcy Willis*
(780) 422-2252

New energy options on the horizon

The search for energy alternatives continues with innovative options such as biogas and earth energy. Researchers are examining several new sources of energy that will further expand the toolbox for building a sustainable agricultural industry. "At the AgTech Centre, we try to find new ways to provide agriculture with energy alternatives that are cost effective and sustainable," says Rick Atkins, AgTech Centre manager and branch head of Engineering for Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Lethbridge. "With continued research and development in this area, the real societal, environmental and economic benefits of new energy sources will become more viable."

Biogas

One option researchers are exploring is biogas, a fuel produced by the anaerobic digestion of organic material such as manure. This innovative energy source can be used to produce heat or electricity.

"Biogas can be produced on site with a digester," says Brian Sexton, engineer in training with Alberta Agriculture, Lethbridge. "Basically, manure is fed into the digester, where it is heated and kept for several days under anaerobic conditions (no oxygen). Because of Alberta's climate, heat usually has to be added for this process to take place. Anaerobic bacteria thrive in these conditions and break down the manure to produce methane or biogas. This biogas can be used to run a boiler for heat or to power a generator for electricity."

Effluent from the process has little odour, and contains fewer weed seeds and pathogens than raw manure, which is a benefit in cropping. "Digestion converts the nutrients found in the manure to a form that is more readily available to crops," adds Sexton.

However, anaerobic digestion probably isn't for every operation. The process works best with liquid manure systems. As well, biogas production requires a large capital

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investment, specialized training and daily upkeep. Proper handling is required, as biogas is explosive. As a result, only a larger dairy, 300 head or over, and swine production operations with over 2,000 animals, could see this as a viable alternative.

To make biogas cost effective, the gas must be used as it is produced, explains Sexton. Matching the energy production to heat and electricity demands of an operation, plus being able to sell the excess energy, is the only way to make biogas cost effective. "This is difficult because the energy demands of an operation can vary widely depending on the season. Combination operations, such as a hog operation and greenhouse operation, can make better use of the energy produced.

"Currently there are about 25 systems operating in the U.S. Pilot projects have been conducted in Canada over the years, but the economics have not been viable. However, significant advances in anaerobic digestion technology have made today's systems more feasible. As a result, a number of systems are being built in western Canada."

Earth energy

A more widely available energy source is earth heating and cooling systems. Earth energy systems use temperatures found in the earth or groundwater to heat or cool air and water for buildings.

"For instance, a heat pump can extract heat from the ground to heat a building," explains Sherry Perih, with the Alberta Agriculture engineering branch, Red Deer. "Reversing the pump in the summer can provide air conditioning by moving hot air out of a building and down into the ground."

Operating costs of an earth energy system are much lower than the costs of operating a combustion furnace with an air conditioning unit, but the cost to install an earth energy system can be higher than the cost of installing a combustion system. "On average, an earth energy system can save two thirds of the cost of heating and cooling with electricity," says Perih.

The initial setup costs are a drawback, but the payback could more than make up those costs. Supplemental heating or cooling may be required if the earth system cannot provide the necessary load. For example, a heating/cooling system for a 1200-sq. ft. area can have a capital cost of $10,000. Payback period for this example would be five to 12 years, depending on energy prices.

"This is a readily available technology, and an option that could provide many benefits, including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions," she adds.

Fuel for thought

"More energy alternatives are coming online all the time, with varying degrees of practicality for current agricultural operations," says Atkins. "Farmers are adopting, and will continue to adopt, economically viable and environmentally sustainable options that fit their operations. With continued research and development to fine-tune the applications for farmers, this trend is likely to grow in the future. For producers, the bottom line will be more options for a new century of sustainable production."

The AgTech Centre and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development Engineering Branch are committed to the development of information for producers and industry. For more information on alternative energy sources, contact the AgTech Centre at (403) 329-1212.

Contact: *Rick Atkins*
(403) 329-1212

Alberta ready for January 1 implementation of new Standards for meat facilities

Meat facilities, including slaughter facilities, butchers, sausage and sandwich meat producers and retail raw meat sellers, have achieved a new standard in food safety. The new provincial Meat Facility Standard was jointly agreed upon and committed to in July 1997. According to the agreement, signed by the Ministers of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Alberta Health and Wellness, all meat facilities in the province will be in compliance with those Standards by January 1, 2002.

"A provincial Meat Facility Standard means consistency in the meat processing industry across the province, and that greater health and safety measures will be taken in processing and packaging meats," says Cliff Munroe, head of Regulatory Services Branch, Food Safety Division, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "Consumer confidence in food safety is imperative for all markets, domestic and export. Having one Standard for meat facilities is one of the ways consumers can be assured of the high level of safety in food products made in Alberta."

Alberta currently has 52 red meat plants, with one new plant starting operation in December 2001; four poultry plants; and, 80 poultry plants operated by the Hutterarian Bretheran of Alberta, with one new one coming into production in December 2001. The province also licenses 85 mobile butchers.

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A Meat Facility Standards Steering Committee, comprised of staff from Alberta Agriculture, Alberta Health and Welfare and a representative from Regional Health Authorities, has met with provincial meat inspectors and public health inspectors to ensure that compliance with the new Standard is effectively implemented. Additionally, Alberta Agriculture hired two food safety systems specialists to lead the assessment process in meat slaughter facilities throughout Alberta. Assessment teams, consisting of a food safety systems specialist, an Alberta Agriculture meat inspector and usually a public health inspector have completed their final assessment of all meat slaughter facilities in the province.

"We are very encouraged with how the assessment process has gone and with the cooperation facilities have shown. Food safety is something the industry takes very seriously," adds Munroe.

For the most part, compliance with the new Standard has meant minor adjustment in operational procedures in some facilities and renovations in others. With only one month left, Alberta meat facilities are well positioned to be in compliance with the new Meat Facilities Standard by January 1, 2001.

Contact: Cliff Munroe
(780) 422-7249

Research into forage barley as a bio-herbicide

The Western Grain Research Foundation is currently working on developing new varieties of forage barley that look promising as a bio-herbicide. These varieties being developed do an exceptionally good job of reducing weed populations without the use of herbicides. Even though these varieties are not licensed yet, the principles involved can be incorporated into normal barley production.

"The first thing to do is choose a competitive variety," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "The varieties we have now will not be as competitive as those being developed. When choosing from the available varieties, remember that taller, more robust types will compete better with weeds than shorter, more prostrate plants."

Weed control is not the only consideration you have in choosing varieties, so this option will be limited. It is also important to use an adequate seeding rate. Fields with low plant populations will have more tillers but those tillers develop after the plant has three or four leaves. Weeds have time to establish before they have to compete with the barley. A population of 20 to 24 plants per square foot is a good target for most cereal crops.

"Another thing to keep in mind is to plant barley so that it emerges and establishes quickly," says Hockridge. "This means having a firm seedbed and planting the grain close to the surface - perhaps one inch deep or less. In-row fertilizer should not be at levels high enough to reduce plant populations."

These steps will help the crop to compete against weeds. Actual weed reductions depend on harvesting before the weeds go to seed. This means taking the barley as a silage or green feed and cutting it early. Recent trials at Lacombe Research Centre showed that weed populations were significantly lowered after two years of making silage at the milk stage. Silage yields were only reduced by about 10 per cent by the practice.

The report from the research foundation did not make any claims about allelopathy or any other factor affecting weeds. They are developing extremely competitive varieties of barley that are suitable as forages. The other practices are only steps to establish a healthy crop quickly and harvesting it before weeds can reproduce. For crops that take a longer period to mature, there isn't the option of cutting early. The other practices mentioned will reduce weed pressure, improving the effectiveness of herbicides. Integrated pest management will become an important strategy in dealing with cropping problems in the future

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

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Agri-News Briefs

Water Institute for Semi-arid Ecosystems (WISE)

The Alberta Research Council Inc. (ARC) is partnering with southern Alberta research, education and health community groups to form a not-for-profit initiative to study and promote sustainable water management. The Water Institute for Semi-arid Ecosystems (WISE) will be housed at the University of Lethbridge and will be a key research and education institute dedicated to water resource management in semi-arid regions. ARC's role will be to develop technologies that ensure Alberta has a sustainable, high quality water supply. Water is a valuable resource with many, sometimes conflicting uses. Water supplies can be easily compromised unless activity impacts are minimized. This new partnership is expected to increase the effectiveness of the region's already well-managed water systems. Its mandate will be to generate and share knowledge, skills and ideas that incorporate responsible stewardship, sensitivity to public health concerns, and sustainable economic development. In addition to ARC, WISE is a partnership of the University of Lethbridge, the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association, the Chinook Health Region, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Alberta Environment, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Health Canada, and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. For further information, visit the WISE web site is at <www.waterinstitute-wise.ca> or contact Daniel Conrad, WISE representative, ARC, (780) 632-8262 or Ena Spalding, corporate relations, ARC, Calgary, (403) 210-5219.

Horse breeders and owners conference

The Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference is being held on January 11, 12 and 13, 2002 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer. This unique conference features 15 internationally recognized speakers making presentations on topics ranging from industry concerns and stable management to feeding and horse health. The conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests in the audience. While many attendees chose to follow a particular program, conference participants can attend any of the sessions, and will receive the printed materials from all sessions. Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2002 conference, contact the Horse Industry Branch in Airdrie at (403) 948-8538 or in Edmonton at (780) 415-6107. Government numbers are toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first.

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Agri-News

December 10, 2001

Books make a wonderful gift

Every year the same question comes up - what do you buy for the person who has everything? Where can you find that something special, just a little out of the ordinary gift to give that 'hard-to-buy-for' person on your list?

Books make a great gift. For the gardening enthusiast, farmer, rancher, 4-H member on your list, it may be worth your while to check out some of the book choices available from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

There are dozens of agriculture publications, ranging from \$3 to \$30, that make terrific gifts and stocking-stuffers. For example:

- ***Alberta Yards and Gardens*** (\$15 plus GST) - gives a fresh, unbiased look at what grows best in Alberta. It's packed with information about selecting ornamental trees and shrubs, lawns, small fruits and berries, flowers, vegetables, herbs and even water plants. Homeowners, hobby gardeners, serious horticulturists and landscape artists will find this book invaluable. It also gives tips and techniques for pruning, wintering roses, container gardening and attracting birds and butterflies.
- ***Garden-fresh Produce*** (\$4 plus GST) - for advice on picking, preserving and preparing, this book will help you enjoy all those fresh vegetables, whether they are grown in your own garden or purchased at the store or nearest Farmers' Market. The easy-to-read, 56-page book covers information on pickling safety and preserving all types of vegetables and fruits. It also contains information about when to pick vegetables and fruit, how to store fresh produce and how to prepare great tasting dishes. (*Available from the Edmonton office only*).
- ***Horse Health*** (\$15 plus GST) - horse owners will love this book. It presents important information along with photographs and illustrations that give a thorough understanding of parasites, pests, infectious diseases, lameness and other common medical problems that can affect a horse's health. It shows how to prevent problems before they begin, how to treat problems and when to call the veterinarian.
- ***Weeds of the Prairies*** (\$20 plus GST) - full colour photos and illustrations detailing 112 weeds makes this the most complete work of its kind on the Canadian prairies. Weeds are color-coded by flower color for easy reference, and the full index makes it easy to find the species by common, scientific or family name. Charts on life cycle and

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Agri-News Publishing Branch, Tel: (780) 427-2121 Fax: (780) 427-2861

Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@agric.gov.ab.ca

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

habitat provide valuable information, and maps show how widespread particular weeds are. This 266-page book will make planning a weed control program easier and more effective. It can also help youngsters learn how to identify weeds.

- ***Beekeeping in Western Canada*** ($25 plus GST) - for experienced beekeepers and those just considering beekeeping, this book gives the information needed to manage honey bees successfully. Learn about the spring management of bees, winter feeding, honey extraction, honey bee health and marketing beeswax, pollen and honey crops. The provincial apiculturists in Canada's four western provinces packed this publication full of the best possible information on beekeeping in the west.
- ***Pulse Crops in Alberta*** ($25 plus GST) - this award-winning publication is a must-have for anyone interested in pulse crops. Learn the basics about pulse production or get more specifics in full color pages on field pea, dry bean, lentil and fababean. Also included is information on some lesser known pulses in Alberta, such as chickpea, fenugreek, grasspea, lupin and soybean.
- ***Growing Native Plants of Western Canada: Common Grasses and Wildflowers*** ($30 plus GST) - with over 100 pages of text and photographs, this book takes an in-depth look at 48 species of native plants that have shown promise for ecological repair. It will help anyone interested in collecting, growing and commercially producing native plants. (*Available from the Edmonton office only*).
- For those people on your list who like getting their information in front of a computer, ***Weed Identification Program CD-ROM*** ($10 plus GST) - is a helpful resource in identifying weeds and improving weed control. It was designed for farmers who want to improve weed control, agronomists who provide field service and backyard gardeners who will also find the CD useful. It contains information on five grasses and 56 broadleaf weeds. It also features a gallery of photos showing weeds at different growth stages; a description section that gives details about each weed; and, a glossary of terms.

These, along with many other book titles make wonderful gifts and are available at the publications office of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, 7000 - 113 Street, Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6. Book orders can also be placed by calling toll-free 1-800-292-5697 or 427-0391 in Edmonton. Please add $2 (plus GST) per order for shipping and handling. Most of these books are also available at district offices of Alberta Agriculture.

Contact: Publications Office
(780) 427-0391

It's time to prune dead wood out of elms

You can help prevent Dutch Elm Disease (DED) from threatening your elm trees. In Alberta, there is a pruning ban on elms between the dates of April 1 and September 30. Removal of dead elms and pruning of all dead wood out of healthy elms should only be done between October 1 and March 30.

"Elm bark beetles breed in dead and dying elm wood," says Janet Feddes-Calpas, DED program coordinator with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton. "These beetles can be vectors of the DED fungus and spread it from elm tree to elm tree. This is why it is so important to remove and properly dispose of all elm wood that can be possible beetle habitat. If elm trees are pruned during the pruning ban, the smell of freshly cut wood may attract the beetles carrying DED to a healthy tree. For this reason all pruning must be done in the winter months."

Once the tree has been pruned, all elm wood, including the bark, needs to be properly disposed before April 30. Beetles will also breed in elm firewood; therefore it is illegal to store it. Disposal can be done by burning, burying or chipping. Elm stumps must be totally removed, usually by stump grinding, or debarked to ground level.

"Alberta is still free of DED, although its borders are being pressed from two sides, Saskatchewan and Montana," adds Feddes-Calpas. "There is no cure once an elm is infected, but DED can be prevented. We must be stay vigilant to keep our elms healthy."

For more information on how to prevent Dutch Elm Disease check the web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ded>.

Contact: Janet Feddes-Calpas
(780) 422-7199

Horse Breeders and Owners Conference

Alberta Horse Breeders and Owners Conference, organized by the Horse Industry Section of Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and the Horse Industry Association of Alberta is being held on January 11, 12 and 13, 2002 at the Capri Centre in Red Deer.

The conference offers different programs designed to fit different equine interests. While many attendees chose to follow a particular program, conference participants can attend any of the sessions and will receive the printed materials from all sessions.

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"Each year, the conference features excellent speakers to present information on topics and issues that Albertans in the equine industry can benefit from," says Les Burwash, manager of equine programs with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie. "This year is no exception. The organizing committee have 15 of the best speakers on the agenda to present research findings, marketing information and advice and share training ideas and techniques."

Conference presenters for 2002 include:

Dan Rosenberg, president and manager of Three Chimneys Farm (famous Thoroughbred farm in Kentucky) - Establishing and Maintaining Good Client Relationships

Dr. Deb Bennett, expert on conformation as it relates to function, author and speaker - Evaluating Conformation for Athletic Ability

Dr. Donna Chaw, faculty member at Olds College - Composting - an Alternative for Manure Management

Bill Collins, world renowned horse trainer, Calgary - Handling Horses Safely

Dr. Steve Duren, nutritional consultant for Kentucky Equine Research, Idaho - Effectiveness of Oral Joint Supplements

Greg Gartner, partner in the law firm Felesky Flynn, Edmonton - The Horse Industry and Revenue Canada

Dr. Karyn Malinowski, equine extension specialist, Rutgers University, New Jersey - Feeding and Managing the Older Horse

Dr. Richard Miller, University of Michigan - The Process of Aging

David Switzer, executive director of the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association - Working Together to Build and Promote the Horse Industry

Karen Waite, extension associate, Equine Youth Activities, Michigan State University - Using Learning Styles to Teach More Effective Riding Lessons

Dr. Lori Warren, provincial horse specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Edmonton - Feeding Myths and Misconceptions

Dr. David Wilson, faculty/researcher at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, Saskatoon - Managing Angular Limb Deformities.

"Each year, the conference features an SPCA invited speaker as part of the Fred Pearce Memorial Speaker series," adds Burwash. For 2002, that speaker is **Kimball Lewis** from Idaho. His chosen topic is Truths and Myths About Horse Neglect and Abuse."

The program starts with a wine and cheese reception on Friday, January 11 at 7:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday's sessions begin at 8:40 a.m.

Conference registration is $85 per person. For more information about the 2002 conference, contact the Horse Industry Branch in Airdrie at (403) 948-8538 or in Edmonton at (780) 415-6107. Government numbers are toll-free by dialing 310-0000 first.

Contact:	*Les Burwash* *(403) 948-8538*	*Lori Warren* *(780) 415-6107*

Know what to look for in the fields

Observations in the fall can sometimes give farmers a leg-up on management decisions for next year's crop. Being prepared is often the most important part of stopping small problems from becoming disasters. The question is what to look for?

"Insects at harvest time often indicate a potential challenge for next year," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "If flea beetles are plentiful now, you may have to worry about seedling canola in the spring. Lindane is in the process of de-registration as a seed treatment for canola. With the current uncertain status of this product, many farmers are contemplating the elimination of the insecticide portion of their seed treatment this year. In many parts of Alberta, they will run into problems with flea beetles as a result. If you are only using a fungicide treatment on seed, it will be important to check the crop closely as it emerges. If flea beetles are plentiful, you could save some money by spraying the outside rounds of the field only."

Weeds growing in the fall may be an indicator of things to come in the spring too. It is important to make some kind of assessment on why they are present. Sprayer misses will allow weeds to produce seeds that contribute to the seed bank. Escapes in areas that have been sprayed may be of more concern because they could be plants that have resistance to the herbicides that have been used. Weeds, such as chickweed, that mature rapidly, are probably just indicators of climatic conditions late in the year.

Plant disease symptoms in the fall have less influence on next year's decisions. They often result from using a variety that has little resistance to the disease in question, or from weather conditions that are peculiar to that year. They can influence crop rotation plans, though.

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"We often feel that we have Alberta winters to correct many of the problems we see at harvest time," adds Hockridge. "Certainly the cold weather does eliminate or decrease the importance of some pests. However, there are situations in the fall that carry over to the spring. These are the ones that need to be observed so control programs can be planned before the pest becomes an emergency."

Contact: Ron Hockridge
(780) 361-1240

Customer service is vital to success

Customer service - that's what it's all about. To run a successful operation, it's important to find out what can be done to make customers want to come back. When customers are visiting your business, make every effort to make them feel important.

"Really effective customer service can be accomplished in a number of ways and it doesn't have to cost a lot of money or time," says Eileen Kotowich, rural development specialist – business with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Vermilion. "It can be as simple as greeting customers with a friendly smile, having the subtle smell of pot-pourri making the place of business more inviting, having a play area for children so parents can shop, or giving advice on how to prepare fresh food products. Having a good product is one aspect of the shopping experience, but people will return to shop at a business a second time if they were made to feel welcome and important by the sales staff."

Farm direct marketers and agri-tourism operators are no exception. Sometimes it's hard to differentiate a product from the one being offered at the next farm. In that case, customer service is what will keep customers coming back week after week.

"Excellent customer service was one of the positives noted at many of the stops made on the Explore Direct Summer Tours earlier this year in August," adds Kotowich. "The tour took participants to 16 different farm direct marketing and agri-tourism operations throughout the province. All of these businesses are successful, and the two main reasons for that success are the excellent products they have for sale and customer service that is second to none."

Sweetgrass Farms is an example of one of the tour stops that makes the customer number one. Located 14 kilometres outside of Stony Plain, the *Lily Ladies* offer knowledgeable, customized service to all customers. They have over 50 varieties of beautiful lilies in stock and they will help customers make selections for their gardens so that the lilies will bloom all summer. And, they listen to their customers too! When someone asked them if they supplied lilies for weddings, their reply was, "We do now!" In that particular instance, they put together beautiful bouquets for the bridal party. When asked if a group could come out for tea on their premises, they turned one end of one of the greenhouses into a teahouse.

"The owners and staff at Sweetgrass Farms wanted to make sure the tour was pleasant and unforgettable, so they hired a wandering minstrel to perform in the background while the group toured the operation. It was a beautiful touch and showed the care they were willing to put into the group's experience," says Kotowich

Not every business can adapt that quickly to customer requests - nor is it necessary to do so. Businesses should, however, keep the product consistent and offer positive, dependable service. Do the little things - you'll be surprised how much of a difference it makes, and the extra effort will keep customers coming back.

For more information on providing excellent customer service, or for information about where to get customer service training, contact one of Alberta Agriculture's rural development specialist – business:

Kerry Engel	Westlock	(780) 349-4465
Lori-Jo Graham	Olds	(403) 556-4244
Lisa Houle	Red Deer	(403) 340-5369
Lynn Stegman	Red Deer	(403) 340-7010
Sharon Stollery	Stony Plain	(780) 963-6101
Slav Heller	St. Paul	(780) 645-6301
Kathy Lowther/ Donna Fleury	Airdrie	(403) 948-8537
Janice McGregor	Edmonton	(780) 415-2317
Leona Reynolds-Zayak	Vermilion	(780) 853-8101
Eileen Kotowich	Vermilion	(780) 853-3223
Linda Hawk	Medicine Hat	(403) 529-3616
Jan Warren	Vulcan	(780) 485-5116
Marian Williams	Camrose	(780) 679-1210

Contact: Kerry Engel
(780) 349-4465

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Standards for earthen manure storage facilities protect the environment

Five earthen manure storages (EMS) were studied from 1999 to 2000 in an effort to assess the design, construction, and maintenance practices for older structures. The study considered the risk of groundwater contamination from lateral seepage and the practicality of using the Geonics EM-31 electromagnetic inductance meter to characterize seepage plumes. It also evaluated the usefulness of available remote site data (such as water well logs and geological maps) in characterizing a site without the expense of extensive site investigation.

"The EMS studied, all of which are 10 to 20 years old, were chosen as a representative sample of this type of structure to evaluate the integrity of the structures," says Peter Llewellyn, agricultural engineer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Red Deer. "The EMS were constructed by bulldozer or trackhoe with the excavated material piled to build the containing berms. This practice does not meet current Alberta Agriculture standards as listed in the 2000 Code of Practice for Responsible Livestock Development and Manure Management. The new standards require an engineering design and subsequent engineered construction."

Preliminary investigation of the remote site data, including air photographs and soil maps, and a Geonics EM-31 survey of surrounding soil conductivity was done in preparation for the study. Soil sampling was completed to eight metres below ground for physical and chemical soil properties, as well as a local site topographical survey. Piezometers were installed around the manure storage so that water sampling could be done and so that the researchers could determine hydraulic conditions at the sites.

"The water sampling included repeat testing of physical, chemical and microbiological characteristics of shallow groundwater around the manure storages," says Llewellyn. "All of this sampling was analyzed to characterize the usefulness of the EM-31 data based on soil and water data. The data were also used to determine, if there was any amount of seepage, and to chart its direction and source. At sites where there was no seepage, it was important to determine why."

The manure storages studied exhibited few indications of seepage. All detected seepage was attributed to a variety of common failure mechanisms, including:

- manure storage floor dug down to bedrock. The bedrock interface with the side of the berm provides a means of transporting contaminants
- coarse soil conditions, sand lenses, and fractured bedrock. These porous soils provide a means of transporting liquid from the manure storages
- woody vegetation growing on the berms. The roots create a conduit for liquid movement and cause overall weakening of the berm
- leaving the native topsoil in place during construction will provide a porous layer through the berm through which seepage can occur

"The general conclusions of this study are based on the conditions observed at the five sites investigated and may not be indicative of older EMS in general," cautions Llewellyn. "All of the sites in the study exhibited one or more undesirable features that would cause them to not meet the current design and construction standards. In the five structures studied, natural biological sealing, subsurface upward water pressure and other conditions contributed to minimizing the seepage."

The research suggests site specific soil investigations of older EMS, as recommended by the ***2000 Code of Practice for Responsible Livestock Development and Manure Management***, are advisable. It is important to take steps to bring all EMS up to the standards set out in the Code to Code help ensure environmental sustainability for these types of structures.

Contact: *Peter Llewellyn, E.I.T.*
(403) 340-5330

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Family labour still excluded from FIDP

A recent item under review for the Farm Income Disaster Program (FIDP) was family labour. At one point it was thought that family labour would be included as an eligible expense for the first time for the 2001 claim year - it was reported that it would be in the FIDP Guide for the 2000 Claim Year. However, after further review, it's been decided to not change the rule, and maintain the current ruling, which excludes family labour as an expense under FIDP. For more information on FIDP, call 1-800-851-5070, or visit the web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/afsc>.

Marketing to retail

A one-day workshop featuring successful strategies for accessing the retail market, obtaining a product listing and pricing products is being offered in three locations in Alberta in 2002. Whether you are preparing for your first or your tenth new product presentation, this workshop can help you do a better job. You will learn what it takes to get that listing with a distributor, wholesaler or retailer and gain an insight into the food industry from their perspective. Whether you are approaching a buyer in the food service industry, the convenience store business, or the food and general merchandise trade, their needs are basically the same. The key is preparation and how you go about meeting those needs. The workshop registration fee is $50 per person (plus $3.50 GST) and includes a manual and lunch. The workshop is being offered on:

January 21, 2002	Red Deer, Provincial Building
February 19, 2002	Leduc, Food Processing Development Center
March 5, 2002	Medicine Hat, Provincial Building

To register for the workshop, call toll free 1-800-387-6030. For more information, contact Allan Pelletier, development officer with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Edmonton (780) 422-2591, Suzanne Tenold, agri-food development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Airdrie (403) 948-8504 or Karen Hoover, agri-food development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Lethbridge (403) 381-5814.

Progress North 2002

The North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association and Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association are hosting Progress North 2002 in Toronto, from January 14 to 20, 2002. The conference is being promoted as a marketplace of innovative ideas providing farmers the opportunity to learn, meet with major industry suppliers, network with fellow growers and participate in activities. Pre-conference bus tours are scheduled for the first three days, January 14 to 16, followed by three days of workshops and presentations. The workshops and presentations are organized into eight categories: Farmers' Markets; rural tourism; advanced markets; ornamental enhancements; innovative blueprints; specialties; entertainment for all seasons; and, on-farm functions. The final day, January 20 is set aside for a post-conference bus tour to the Niagara Peninsula. For further information, contact the Ontario Farm Fresh Marketing Association at (905) 945-9057 or visit the conference web site at <www.nafdma.com>.

Costing a product

A costing seminar has been developed specifically for the beginning or emerging agri-food processor; especially for those working on new product development projects or companies using the Food Processing Center (Leduc) as a processing facility. The seminar is appropriate for any agri-food processor interested in learning or reviewing the basics of product costing principles required for product development and marketing. The one-day ***Costing Your Product*** seminar emphasizes the importance of a solid business and marketing plan in the establishment of a viable business venture and will provide some insight into wholesale and retail distribution systems. It is being offered in two locations in 2002:

January 9, 2002	Airdrie,	Agriculture Center
March 12, 2002	Red Deer,	Provincial Bldg.

The seminar costs $35 per person (plus 2.45 GST), and includes lunch, workshop and manual. For further information, contact Suzanne Tenold, agri-food development specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Airdrie, (403) 948-8504. To register for the workshop, call toll free 1-800-387-6030.

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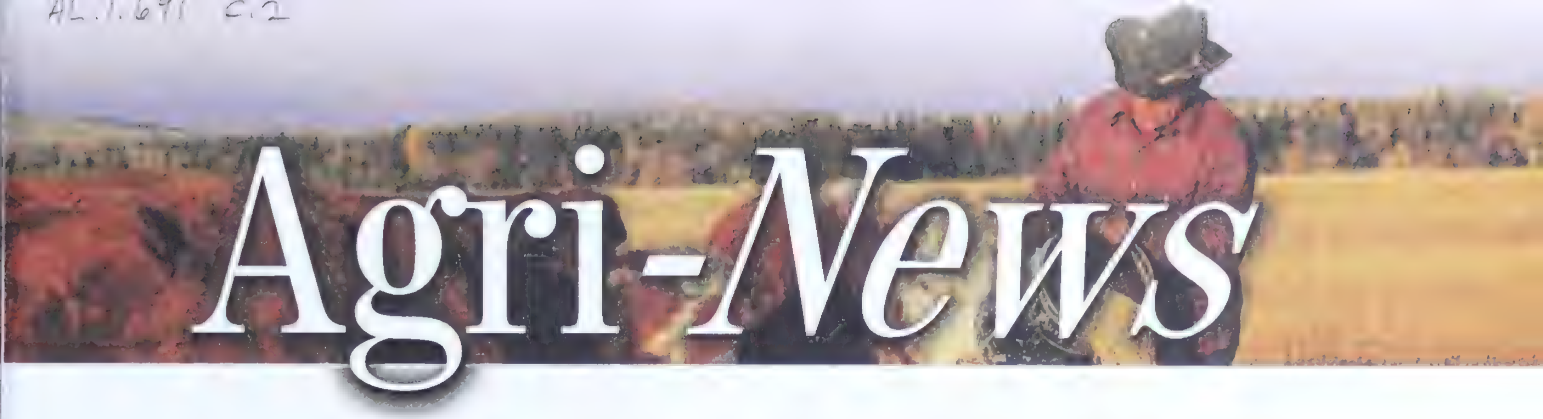

Agri-News

December 17, 2001

Land use conference of interest to Albertans

Every Albertan interested in ensuring quality of life, quality of environment and quality of an assured food supply should consider participating in the land use conference planned for January 2002 in Edmonton.

"*The Land Supports Us All* land use conference is the first forum ever for widespread discussion of the province's future land use," says conference chair Harvey Buckley. Buckley, a Cochrane rancher, announced details of the conference that will bring together landowners, urban and rural residents, developers, professional planners, agrologists, educators, industry associations and elected representatives from the Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments to share their experience and thoughts on a future land use strategy for Alberta.

The conference, being held at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton, January 14 to 16, 2002, stems from a public consultation process called Ag Summit. However, the conference now includes all sectors of the economy. Candace Vanin, co-chair of the Ag Summit Action Team responsible for seeing the conference through, says, "We wanted a community approach to exploring future land use. The conference is gaining an international reputation already. Bringing agriculture, forestry, energy, and elected officials together with urban and rural Albertans and others is unique. It is the first step in developing a land use legacy that balances growth and development with quality of life concerns and care for the environment."

"We want to work together," says Les Brost, chair of Agrivantage (the continuation of Ag Summit). "This conference is an opportunity to discuss the issues that affect and frame our future. The conference is everyone's concern. Expanding urban areas have costs that we must all support. Urban expansion uses land. It also creates a need for infrastructure that accompanies new developments. New schools, recreation centres and the associated transportation routes and shopping complexes are introduced. The other side of the coin is that inner city areas decline. The truth is that we don't really know the cost of urban sprawl.

This is only one issue that already affects us. The conference will be discussing many more." Brost urges all Albertans to attend and invite friends and business associates.

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Internet site: www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agrinews Editor e-mail: agrinews@agric.gov.ab.ca

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT

"With another million people predicted for Alberta in the next 15 years, oil and gas, forestry, exploration, and environmental issues are going to increase," says Harvey Buckley. "It is time we discuss this important issue. Be sure to participate to learn the issues."

Places are limited. Additional information is on the conference web site <www.landuse.ab.ca>. Contact the conference committee by email < gmcewen@interbaun.com>, phone (780) 444-6344 or fax (780) 439-4378.

Contact: *Goldwin McEwen*
gmcewen@interbaun.com
(780) 444-6344 or fax: (780) 439-4378

Avoid the Grinch who spoils the holiday food

Food plays a large part in holiday festivities and so should safe food handling to evade the food-borne illness Grinch.

"This month many cooks will be providing food for potluck gatherings, office parties and church dinners," says Nelson Fok, Manager Research and Development, Environmental Health for the Capital Health Authority. A slip-up in the kitchen can infect many people. It's important to know how to safely prepare food ahead then to transport it either chilled or piping hot. And, be sure these party and buffet spreads don't sit out at room temperature for more than two hours.

"Juggling the large number of dishes that get served at a home party or family holiday dinner is so frazzling that even the most competent cook could lose their food safety smarts," advises Jane Carlyle, coordinator of the Food Safety Info Line. "Plus some traditional holiday foods pack their own health hazards. Knowing the special handling needs of holiday foods will ensure healthy, safe holiday food for your family."

- Eggs - if making homemade eggnog, choose a recipe that cooks into a custard base or use pasteurized eggs; keep refrigerated and drink it all the same day.
- Fresh fruits and vegetables - many are imported at this time of year and more likely to be contaminated. Thoroughly rinse under cool running water; refrigerate, especially when cut.
- Seafood - is the leading known cause of foodborne illness outbreaks in the U.S. It is highly perishable so whether raw or cooked, use within two days; thoroughly wash utensils and cutting board with soap and hot water after preparation and serve chilled or piping hot.
- Spreads, dips and desserts made with dairy products - keep chilled, devour within a few days. Some can be frozen for longer storage.
- Turkey - look for Turkey Dinner Made Easy brochures where you shop. The brochures contain step-by-step instructions for safe turkey preparation and roasting and the toll-free phone number of the Food Safety Info Line 1-800-892-8333, which can be called for more information about turkey preparation. Use a meat thermometer to determine doneness. It should register 180°F (82°C) when inserted in the thigh.

Western Canadians can obtain information about the safe preparation of these and other holiday foods from the professional home economists that staff the toll-free Food Safety Info Line. The line, which is partially supported by the Wild Rose Foundation, an Alberta Government Lottery Funded Foundation, is answered Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time.

Contact: *Jane Carlyle*
1-800-892-8333

New pea types, new potential markets

While green and yellow field pea varieties dominate the acreage in western Canada, new types of field pea with different market uses are being researched in Alberta. In 2001, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's pulse and special crop specialists had eight *Special Purpose Field Pea Cultivar* sites (Grande Prairie, Westlock, Namao, Andrew, Wainwright, Lacombe, Carstairs and Brooks) with 20 special purpose peas at each site.

"These *special purpose* field pea types will have a limited acreage," says Mark Olson, pulse and special crops specialist, Lacombe. "The primary market use for field peas is human consumption. Marketability is highly dependent on quality, so poor quality or lower grades will erase any price premiums. For producers who are first time field pea growers, this is definitely not the types of field pea they should start their pea growing experience with."

Research to date shows a few of the special purpose pea types yielding equal to the check varieties, Espace and Integra, but the majority of special purpose peas don't. For this reason, price premiums are offered for growing these special purpose pea types. Additionally, standability of these cultivars tends to be poorer overall, and they mature later.

The types of special purpose cultivars tested during the past year were:

- green marrowfats (gmf)) - a large blocky green pea that are canned and used for mushy peas in England or roasted and puffed for use as a snack food

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- brown marrowfats (bmf) - also large and blocky, but brown in color and used to make pea butter - a tasty, peanut free alternative to peanut butter
- blackeye green and blackeye yellow peas - have a black dot on the pea and have potential in parfait soup mixes, salads and as replacement for black eye beans in soups
- maple peas - have a blotchy seed coat that is caused by tannins. This type of pea is used as bird seed or for silage or plowdown in organic systems
- forage type cultivars - have a small seed size and produce large quantities of biomass and are used in silage mixtures or for plowdown purposes
- orange peas - have an orange colored seed coat and have potential as a substitute for red split lentils
- white peas - have a whitish seed coat and have potential as a chickpea substitute in India and other countries

"For pea growers considering growing special purpose peas, it is highly advisable to do your homework well before obtaining the seed," adds Paul Laflamme, pulse and special crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Grande Prairie. "Special purpose peas require a contract from a specific company, and acreages will be limited."

For more information on special purpose peas, contact Olson (403) 782-3301, Laflamme (780) 538-5285, or your local Alberta Agriculture pulse and special crops specialist.

Contact:	*Mark Olson*	*Paul Laflamme*
	(403) 782-3301	*(780) 538-5285*

2001 grasshopper survey results are in

The preliminary results from this year's grasshopper survey have arrived. Although the data needs to be confirmed, the results serve as a reminder of the usefulness of this data.

The 2002 hopper risk assessment map is expected to be ready for release by February 2002. Dr. Dan Johnson, Lethbridge Research Centre, is the recognized pioneer of insect risk assessment mapping who constructs this map. The map is more then a simple plotting of the numbers, as it includes data on the historical environmental conditions of all the areas of the province and suitability for hopper out-breaks. Over 1600 sites of grasshopper counts are used to construct the map, and credit goes to the Ag fieldmen who collect this data yearly!

Assessments are made because a grasshopper outbreak is far more costly if it catches farmers and extension people by surprise. A case in point was the outbreak in 1982. Pastures were greening-up nicely in late May, and everything looked to be going well, but then nothing seemed to be progressing much in early June. In fact, by the second week in June, many pastures appeared over-grazed. When farmers checked their fields, they found close to 150 small grasshoppers per square foot across most of these pastures. It was an obvious case for spraying, but productivity was definitely lost before the problem was identified.

"Insect surveys serve as a guideline," says Ron Hockridge, crop specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "They are based on samples taken over a fairly wide area. For grasshoppers, the Agriculture Service Boards sample roadsides and fields in their area after the egg laying period is over. If a county has a number of three or more in the field survey, it is considered to be at risk. The preliminary numbers indicate there is potential for a problem in areas of Alberta next year."

The numbers make sense when you look at the past weather. Grasshoppers lay eggs from early August until freeze-up. The ideal situation for grasshoppers is dry conditions over a prolonged period of time. Alberta received very little rain in late summer 2000 and there wasn't a strong enough frost to stop egg laying until late September. Although most areas of Alberta did not have a major outbreak in 2001, conditions were right for a build up of numbers.

"Being at risk does not always mean there will be an outbreak," adds Hockridge. "Cool, damp weather at the time of hatching can bring on disease epidemics - especially in younger grasshoppers. Early June weather is key."

The survey numbers indicate that farmers should watch their fields carefully in early June 2002. Grasshoppers often hatch in sandy areas and move out to the rest of the crop. Forage crops are particularly susceptible early, but other crops can be attacked as well. Spraying can be minimized if the insects are caught before they spreads out.

"It's best not to base your decisions on preliminary numbers," says Hockridge. "Farmers should look for more reports as they come out over the winter. But, knowing that the risk is there can save money when you can avoid crop loss by acting early. Catching grasshopper infestation at earlier stages also means that insecticide use is reduced."

Contact:	*Ron Hockridge*	*Jim Calpas*
	(780) 361-1240	*Provincial integrated pest management specialist* *(780) 422-4911*

Cont'd on page 4

Ukrainian leaders take a look at agriculture in Alberta

Leaders from Ukraine learned about all aspects of Alberta's agricultural system during a study tour from December 2 to 14, 2001. More than 25 Ukrainian government and agricultural officials took part in the tour, including high-ranking political leaders, several judges and many others responsible for land reforms taking place in Ukraine.

The delegates had a first-hand look at Alberta's land-registry system, farming operations, research centers, financial institutions, and grocery markets. While in the province, delegates met with several Alberta Agriculture department heads and had the chance to tour several of the department's research facilities as well as several private sector plants and facilities.

Information gained from the tour will be applied by delegates to the reforms happening in Ukraine. The country has been undergoing reforms in its land registry and agricultural system since 1992, and has recently focused on privatizing collective farms, liberalizing agricultural trade, and putting in place stronger legal, legislative, and financial foundations for Ukraine's agricultural sector.

Alberta and Ukraine have a long history of cooperation in many different areas. There are more than 250,000 Albertans of Ukrainian descent, making it the fourth largest ethnic group in the province. Last year, the Alberta government created an Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations.

The study tour was sponsored by the World Bank (International Finance Corporation) with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency. It was coordinated by the International Governance Office in Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and Agriculture Canada.

Contact: *Cam Traynor*
International and Intergovernmental Relations
(780) 422-2527

Leah Soroka
Project Manager,
International Finance Corporation
(780) 416-5112 - Cell: (780) 632-8787

Farm financial counseling available from AFSC

Primary producers in Alberta who require consulting on financial areas of their operation, or need help with business plan development can contact Agriculture Financial Services Corporation (AFSC) for this service.

AFSC shares their expertise with farmers, helping them improve their farm business management skills. During the past year, AFSC has helped thousands of farmers with financial counseling services to guide them through the challenges facing farms. The assistance AFSC gave in assessing the farmers' financial options included such things as evaluation of expansion plans, restructuring their debt, and working out alternate arrangements with existing creditors.

The service is totally confidential. If necessary, AFSC also has a strong referral network to put farmers in touch with many other sources of agricultural information or training resources. For more information, contact AFSC at 1-800-396-0215 to find a loans officer closest to your farm.

Contact: *Agriculture Financial Services Corporation*
1-800-396-0215

Jim Majeski
(780) 679-1704

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Agri-News Briefs

Managing greenhouse crops - from seed to harvest workshop

Staff from Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Research Council and Westgro have combined their expertise to conduct a special workshop on January 23, 2002 at the Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), 17507-Fort Road, Edmonton. The workshop, sponsored by the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association (AGGA), will be of interest to people who work in universities, colleges or private research facilities and are involved in growing experimental crops such as wheat, barley or canola under greenhouse conditions. The focus will be on how to grow high quality crops and how to make the plant vegetative or generative. The subjects discussed will include the basic working of a plant, designing a good growing medium, water and nutrient management, and disease and insect controls. People interested in starting a greenhouse business who want to know the basic plant cultural practices, will also benefit from attending the workshop. The cost is $ 50.00 for AGGA members and $70.00 for non-members (cost includes lunch and handout material). Cheques should be made payable to AGGA and mailed to Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, CDCN, R.R.6, Edmonton, AB T5B 4K3. Registration forms are available on-line at <www.agga.ca> or by phone (780) 415-2303. Seating is limited to 30 and pre-registration required. For further information, contact Mirza at (780) 415-2303 or e-mail <mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca>.

Bedding plants production - from seeds to sales

On February 20, 2002, a bedding plants production workshop organized by the Greenhouse Resource Extension and Extension Team (GREAT) will be held in Edmonton. The presentations will focus on how to design a good growing medium, how to make bedding plants produce leaves or flowers on demand, water and nutrient management, diagnosing and managing bedding plant diseases, insect identification, their life cycle, and chemical and biocontrol strategies. The workshop is sponsored by the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association. The cost is $ 50 for AGGA members, $70 for non-members and includes lunch and hand out material. Cheques should be made payable to the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association and mailed to Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, CDCN, R.R.6, Edmonton, Alberta, T5B 4K3. Registration forms are available on-line at <www.agga.ca> or by phone (780) 415-2303. Seating is limited to 30 and pre-registration required. For further information, contact Mirza (780) 415-2303, <mohyuddin.mirza@gov.ab.ca>.

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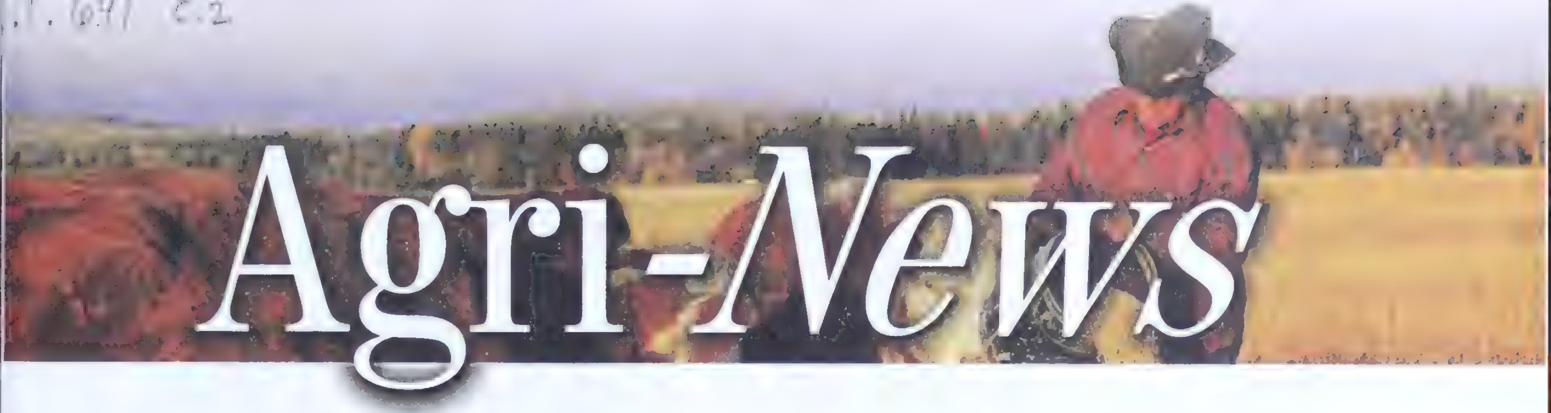

Agri-News

December 24, 2001

Greenhouse crops industry getting ready for next season

Another successful season for greenhouse vegetable growers is coming to a close. By the end of November, greenhouses were cleared of crops like cucumbers, tomatoes and peppers and a break in production was taken so that there is a clean start for the next season. Prior to a new growing season, several steps are taken by growers to ensure that the new crops have the best possible chance of success.

"A break between crops is essential, so that the greenhouse can be cleaned and sanitized," says Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, greenhouse crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's Crop Diversification Centre North (CDCN), Edmonton. "Most of the vegetable growers remove the old plastic from the floor, remove all plant debris and spray the greenhouse with a disinfectant. The purpose for this is to give the new crop a good, clean start with minimum or no insects."

Dr. Nick Savidov, greenhouse crops scientist with Alberta Agriculture's Crop Diversification Centre South (CDCS) in Brooks, adds, "Growers should make sure to remove any weeds that could be tucked into nooks and corners of the greenhouse and may escape detection. These weeds can be a potential source of insects next year"

There are many other aspects of greenhouse sanitation that a grower must pay attention to at this time. "After a crop has been removed, plant pathogens can survive in a greenhouse to initiate the infection in the next crop," says Dr. Piara Bains, senior plant pathologist, CDCN, Edmonton. "Many plant pathogens are known to develop special surviving structures. The pathogens may survive in dried crop residue and on greenhouse surfaces including wires and twines. Spores of plant pathogens like *Fusarium spp* and *Verticillium spp* can spread in the air and settle down later on grow blocks and initiate infection. Spray all greenhouse surfaces with a registered disinfectant. Do not pile plant debris in or around the greenhouse, as the fungal spores can move into the greenhouse with incoming air."

Savidov adds, "Make sure to clean irrigation lines thoroughly. A plugged emitter delivering less than optimum nutrient solution to young seedlings will cause significant stress on the plants and make them generative, when you need the plant to be more vegetative.

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Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Reusing old sawdust bags is not recommended because of the possible presence of root disease causing organisms. Also, when this medium decomposes, water logged conditions may arise.

"The results of a research study completed at the CDCN in 1999, indicated that fruit size in tomatoes decreased significantly in the second year of sawdust use," says Mirza. "Growers should avoid using sawdust that has been previously used. Similarly, aged or decomposed sawdust should be avoided."

New seedlings should be clean, healthy and not damaged. Broken leaves provide infection sites for various fungi to get established. If growers are bringing in seedlings from outside the province, make sure that they are free of insects and diseases.

"If young seedlings carry small infestations of whitefies or spider mites, the infestation can become very serious as the plant grows under low light conditions," explains Dr. Kwesi Ampong-Nyarko, entomologist at the CDCN. "Leaf cells are weak and the insects can easily puncture them and this means that their populations can increase rapidly."

Dr. Ken Fry, entomologist at the Alberta Research Council, Vegreville emphasizes the need to start monitoring insect populations very early. "Many biological controls can be introduced early if some artificial lights are used," says Fry. "Watch for aphids on peppers, whiteflies on tomatoes and thrips on cucumbers. It is easier to start practicing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) at an early stage. Also, ask the seedling supplier what pesticides have been sprayed, as this will affect the introduction of biocontrol agents."

For further information on greenhouse production in Alberta, contact Mirza (780) 415-2303; Savidov (403) 362-1312; Bains (780) 415-2302; Ampong-Nyarko (780) 415-2316l; or, Fry (780) 632-8224.

Contact: *Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza*
(780) 415-2303

Agriculture Hall of Fame accepting nominations

Nominations are being accepted for the highest honour bestowed on Albertans involved in agriculture, food and rural development: induction into the Agriculture Hall of Fame. Shirley McClellan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, invites Albertans to nominate deserving individuals. Deadline for nominations is March 15, 2002.

"Agriculture is one of Alberta's most important industries," says McClellan. "The people involved – from producers, to processors, to researchers, to marketers – play a significant role in our quality of life. They are the people that are honoured through the Agriculture Hall of Fame."

Every second year, Albertans who have made outstanding contributions to rural life and agriculture are named to the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame spotlights those who exemplify leadership and accomplishment in their careers at the community, provincial, national or international level.

Since the Hall of Fame's opening in 1951, 108 men and women have been honoured. Those chosen for induction will be named in October 2002 and recognized during the 2002 Agriculture and Food Week. Their portraits and a listing of their contributions will be displayed in the Agriculture Hall of Fame at the J.G. O'Donoghue Building in Edmonton.

Nomination forms for the Alberta Agriculture Hall of Fame are available at any Alberta Agriculture district office, on the web site <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca>, or by contacting:

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Agriculture Information Division
J.G. O'Donoghue Building
7000 - 113 Street
Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6
Phone: (780) 427-2727

For toll-free calling outside of Edmonton, please dial 310-0000

Contact: *Bard Haddrell* *Lillian Chan*
(780) 427-2727 *(780) 422-0492*

Supplementing beef cows

Mother Nature threw a big curve ball at the cow-calf producer this year. Lack of adequate rainfall reduced supplies of normal, traditional beef cow feedstuffs. Some producers found it difficult to adjust to this scenario so they've reduced or sold off their cows. Others have adjusted and are finding ways to use supplemental feeds with their normal feedstuffs.

"Producers wondering whether or not they need to supplement their beef cows need to examine the quality of the feed they are using," says Bill Grabowsky, beef specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Wetaskiwin. "If producers are using the normal cow rations that they have always used, all that may be needed is some fine tuning. But, if low quality feeds such as cereal straw, grass seed aftermath, legume straws and chaffs are going to be used as a major source of the cows' winter ration, supplementation should be considered."

Low quality feeds are usually described as having less than seven per cent crude protein and having a digestible energy of less than one Mega calorie per pound. Most cereal straws are termed low quality roughages and are usually deficient in energy, protein, minerals and vitamins. Without supplementation, cows fed only straw will become sick and will not re-breed.

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"Beef cows need a certain, minimal amount of roughage in their diets to keep functioning as ruminants," continues Grabowsky. "This probably amounts to about one-half to three quarters of a pound of roughage per day per 100 pounds of cow body weight. This means that a 1350-pound cow would need approximately seven to 10 pounds of roughage per day to keep the rumen going. The rest of a cow's dry matter requirements can be filled with other protein and high-energy source feeds. When you're short of high-fibre feeds, this can work to your advantage. Remember that when using low quality feeds, rumen bacteria need a protein source as well as an energy and mineral/vitamin source to digest these feeds. They are most efficient when everything is balanced."

Maximum consumption of low quality feeds should be limited to about one and one quarter (1 1/4) per cent of a cow's dry matter intake. If the amounts of average quality feeds are reduced, and grain is available for purchasing, feeding six pounds of barley grain could replace 12 pounds of average quality hay. As well, low quality feeds should be supplemented with a combination of energy, protein, vitamins and minerals. The exact amounts would depend on the breed of the cow, body condition score, stage of pregnancy, and outside temperature. The best way to balance a ration for cow herds is to feed test the feeds being used and then use that information with a ration balancing program, such as *COWBYTES*. This feeding program tool also gives producers the opportunity to enter the costs of the feeds and in the end will give a cow cost per head per day figure. More information on the COWBYTES program is available on-line at <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/ruraldev/homestdy/cowbytes.html>

"There are many cattle feeding options out there to use with low quality feeds," says Grabowsky. "Many involve feeds such as silage, grains, pellets, cubes, and liquid supplements. Partnering some of these feeds with low quality and average to above-average quality roughages in the right ratios and price ranges, makes a lot of sense. The long-term goal of cow-calf producers is to wean off a live calf every year from every cow! Supplementation is the key to making it happen this year."

Contact: Bill Grabowsky
(780) 361-1240

Marketing and production of medicinal herbs

A ***Marketing and Production of Medicinal Herbs*** workshop has been developed for Albertans thinking about getting started in a medicinal herb enterprise, but don't know how. The workshop will also be of interest to those who have planted some medicinal herbs already, but haven't developed a marketing plan, or are growing and marketing medicinal herbs, but need to expand their marketing skills, knowledge and industry contacts.

The workshop is a two-day program, offered at:
St. Paul, January 21 and 22, 2002
Airdrie, January 24 and 25, 2002
Leduc, January 28 and 29, 2002

All workshops run from 9:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on both days.

"Experienced instructor, marketer and grower, Jo Detillieux, Spruce Home, Saskatchewan, will provide an overview of the medicinal herb industry," says Kristy Piquette, pulse and special crops specialist with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, St. Paul. "Topics include market research, marketing plans, production contracts, marketing your own products, agronomics for specific herbs and industry contacts. Detillieux will discuss what buyers want, what to look for in marketing and share research information about the medicinal herbs industry."

After completing the workshop, participants will go home with a good overview of the medicinal herbs industry, information about what buyers are looking for, and a resource manual including industry contact information for buyers, brokers and processors. Each workshop is $85 (includes GST) per person and is limited to 25 participants. The registration deadline for all workshops is January 15, 2002.

Program sponsors are Alberta Agriculture, Canada-Alberta Farm Business Management Program and Alberta Agriculture's special crops product team.

For registration and more information contact the Alberta Agriculture, St. Paul Office, at (780) 645-6301, fax (780) 645-2848, or e-mail <kirsty.piquette@gov.ab.ca>. For toll-free access dial 310-0000 first and then the phone number.

Contact: Kirsty Piquette
(780) 645-6301

Federal funds for water development in Alberta

The Government of Canada is contributing up to $1.2 million in additional funding for the Rural Water Development Program (RWDP) to support initiatives to increase water supply in drought-affected areas of Alberta. This federal funding is in addition to the $2.2 million spent each year in Alberta through the RWDP.

"Areas of our province have experienced the worst drought conditions in 130 years, leaving many producers concerned about secure water supplies," says Shirley McClellan, Alberta's Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. "This welcomed funding complements Alberta Farm Water Program that assists farmers secure long-term water supplies for projects such as farm wells, stock water dams, cisterns and dugouts."

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The additional federal funding will be used to determine the quantity and quality of ground and surface water sources in key drought areas of Alberta. This will enable the agriculture sector and rural communities to initiate future water infrastructure projects.

The provincial government has also announced funding to support infrastructure development in order to provide additional secure water supplies. The federal government will be working closely with the provincial government to further reduce the risk of water shortages in the future.

Contact: *Terry Willock*
Director, Communications Branch
Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
(780) 422-7683

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Wild Rose convention

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers are holding their sixth annual convention and seminar on January 3 and 4, 2002 at the Red Deer Lodge. The two-day event features seminar presentations on January 3 covering several topics of interest to producers. Some of the presentation subjects are: biotechnology and genetically modified organisms; the effect of the U.S. Farm Bill on agriculture in western Canada; environmental farm plans in the province; country-of-origin labeling; crop insurance; and, the Prime Minister's caucus task force on Future Opportunities in Farming. Presentations by the Board of Directors, nominations and elections will be held on January 4, 2002. For more information, contact Rod Scarlett (780) 451-5912.

Agronomy conference

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's agronomy unit is hosting an Agronomy Update 2002 Conference on January 16 and 17, 2002 at the Days Inn and Conference Centre, Nisku. The theme for the 2002 conference is ***There Are No Magic Bullets***. At the conference, researchers and producers will present highlights of ongoing work. Key topics of discussion being covered include understanding how changes in management can be used to producers' advantage and how weather or crop changes can cause shifts in pest or crop response. Additional topics include: crop rotations, new pests, research on cropping systems, new opportunities for old crops, triticale agronomy and uses, and pulse crops. The cost of the conference is $100 (plus $7 GST). For further information, contact Lorraine Kohlman at (780) 427-7098.

A FIDP Update: Family Labour

Family labour is not allowed under the Farm Income Disaster Program (FIDP) but this rule was under review. The review has been completed and it has been decided that the family labour rule will remain the same: it will not be allowed as an eligible expense under FIDP for the 2001 claim year and beyond. Some applicants may have seen notification in the FIDP Guide for the 2000 Claim Year that family labour would be eligible, but this was incorrect. FIDP apologizes for any confusion this may have caused. For more information on FIDP, call 1-800-851-5070, or visit the web site at <www.agric.gov.ab.ca/afsc>.